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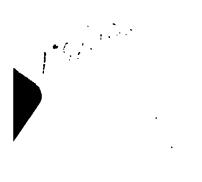
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BY

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6

LONDON GRANT RICHARDS 1908 •

We are all butchers. Some of us kill with the knife: some with the tongue. Some with poison—of wine or kisses. Many in God's name: a few in Satan's. But we all kill the thing we profess to love.

And we butchers ourselves are almost lifeless. Shadows stalking mirthlessly beneath the iron buildings of our cities. We have turned the pavements into a shambles, and the feet of our sons are red with the blood of our daughters.

ARTHUR APPLIN.

....

### **OVERTURE**

Take hands and part with laughter;
Touch lips and part with tears;
Once more and no more after,
Whatever comes with years.
We twain shall not remeasure
The ways that left us twain;
Nor crush the lees of pleasure
From sanguine grapes of pain.

We twain once well in sunder, What will the mad gods do For hate of me, I wonder, Or what for love of you?

Breathe close upon the ashes,
It may be flame will leap;
Unclose the soft close lashes,
Lift up the lids, and weep.
Lift up the lids, and weep.
Let one tear leave it wet
For one that you remember
And ten that you forget.
Swinburne



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### "Ave, Faustina Imperatrix, morituri te salutant!"

THE majority of his visitors were women; they were nearly all young, and many in the prime of life.

They came to him for several reasons—they were women, and one reason was not sufficient. They came because they desired life, and believed he, the greatest of surgeons, could give it them. They came because nature's voice had, a little late, made itself heard, and they wished to regain the lost gift of giving life. And they came because they were driven by fear: the fear of growing ugly; the fear of suffering pain; the fear of losing love—and, perhaps, life.

And they came because Brooke Haigg was the fashion, and some were impelled by curiosity. Even those who were healthy and whole, would gladly have paid five or ten guineas for a private consultation with the famous man, because it was difficult to obtain.

He despised money. He was a woman-hater, it was rumoured; and women had given him the power and the glory he possessed—his con-

sulting rooms in Bruton Street, the nursing home there, and the convalescent home in a Surrey pine-forest where women and flowers were to be found all the year round—fragile hothouse plants clinging fiercely to butchered lives and waning beauty. Fame they had given him and wealth, and their own bodies to be carved and hewn as a sculptor carves and hews his marble women; as cunningly, only, perhaps, with less sincerity and without love.

None ever asked what they received in return; for women are slow to give, but, having given, they desire no return. They are satisfied if they sacrifice themselves on the altar of the Moloch of the moment.

And Haigg was the Moloch of the moment.

Physically, he was not a great man; he possessed a little body and a big brain. His features were strong, cleanly chiselled, his eyes a peculiar colour, almost red, steel-like. They were cold and penetrating: eyes that never asked questions, but answered them before they were asked; eyes that read women's secrets without giving women the painful pleasure of confession; eyes that compelled and ruled. Haigg would have made his mark in any profession: he was born to rule.

Perhaps it was unfortunate he should have been cast to rule women and wield a surgeon's knife, instead of an artist's chisel or a soldier's sword.

But, having started on his bloody road to fame, he bravely refused to go back. He had put his hand to the knife, and he was fast cutting his way to the peerage.

Sometimes he grew tired and, in the sanctity of his own study, cursed his profession, and longed for fresh air, clean hands, a conscience—and freedom. Sometimes he envied the man who, when there was time for friendship, had been his friend. This man had started his career as a general practitioner, fallen in love with life, pampered his conscience, and nearly starved.

This man was fighting, too, as Haigg had fought. But he was not fighting for fame, but for something he, in his ignorance, held dearer, something more elusive even, but more lasting—he fought for life.

Haigg fought with life. He played at skittles with death, and the pieces were women's bodies. He gambled. Perhaps he was not aware of this fact; he never possessed time to look closely into his actions. The fascination of the great game of playing with death, and cheating the master of all men at his own business, was upon him. He had gone too far to turn back. He had convinced himself, and most certainly he had convinced society, of the wisdom of his actions.

And so he was hailed as the great healer of the century—and, it must be confessed, several of his patients lived some years after he had

operated on them. Degrees and honours were showered upon him; he obtained almost any fee he chose to ask.

But he was not a greedy man; though he allowed the gold to accumulate at his banker's, he never allowed the knife to rust in its case. Some of the most wonderful operations had been performed free of charge, and he had been content with the applause of his profession and the gratitude of the unfortunate who lived to marvel at the recuperative powers of the human body.

"Lor', it's unbelievable!" whispered one good woman, when she had recovered sufficiently to realise what had happened to her at Haigg's hands whilst she had been under chloroform in the theatre of the St Juggernaut Hospital.

"Why, I ain't the same woman—look at me, nurse! It's illustrating the truth of the good book—that's what it is—'If thy eye offend thee, pluck it out; if thy hand, cut it off.' It weren't either my 'and or my h'eye—and to think I can live to look at what's left of myself! It's a miracle, that's what it is!"

The London season was commencing, and Haigg greeted, with a sigh of welcome, the close of a particularly arduous and bloody day. Even women who were as nature intended them to be, and who had failed, in spite of all the arts of the dressmaker and the druggist, to persuade nature to take her revenge on them, had pestered Haigg

to examine them and find something that necessitated the knife, the nursing home, paragraphs in fashionable papers, and sympathetic friends with flower-laden motors blocking Park Lane or Pont Street.

Haigg bathed, dressed, and shut himself in his study. He kept a suite of rooms above his consulting rooms in Bruton Street, for he found he could not afford time to sleep outside the four-mile radius. He possessed a cottage in Surrey and a farm in Devonshire, but they seldom saw him. Still, they were useful as addresses which his servant used to circumvent importunate patients.

Haigg stretched himself on a Chesterfield and closed his eyes; he felt strangely tired, almost bored—luxuries he seldom permitted. His brain was on the eve of revolt, and he knew it; several important parts of his anatomy were threatening to go on strike: not because they had been overindulged, but for the opposite reason. His brain suggested relaxation; his eyes almost fiercely demanded to be shown something other than blood, tissue, muscle. He looked at his hands, long, thin, and powerful. He held them against the light from the reading-lamp; they were steady enough, but they, too, were growing tired of the touch of steel. His olfactory nerves suggested the pleasing bouquet from the juice of grapes as a change from the sickly perfume of ether.

And his stomach demanded vehemently the sensuous joys of a good dinner.

"I am growing stale," Haigg muttered under his breath. "Good God, I am growing stale! but Heaven preserve me from drugs!"

He turned on his side and tried to sleep, but sleep was not for the giver of it. He worked, as he lay with closed eyes. He mentally created new diseases, discovered fresh growths eating the fair bodies of foolish women, and, with a cunning no other living man possessed, he cut them away, root and branch; fiercely he took life in one hand and a knife in the other—and juggled.

Skill was certainly his, but he admitted to himself that luck had been his also. No matter how high he had thrown the ball of life into the air whilst he juggled, he had always just managed to catch it, even though he held it but a few seconds ere it slipped to the ground again and scattered into dust.

He turned restlessly on the Chesterfield; for perhaps the first time in his life he wanted to forget work, to shut the door of his profession and remain outside for a brief space.

But that which he had mastered was now his master. He rose, switched on the light, and, sitting at his bureau, commenced to make a diagram of an interesting operation which he was to perform on the morrow on the Duchess of Languidt.

By his side were notes on the case by her own and two consulting physicians. One man, in his original diagnosis, had insisted on a cancerous growth; the other decided there was an enormous sarcoma.

Haigg had decided that neither of them knew, and therefore both were wrong. He did not know himself, but he was inclined to the sarcoma; and as the Duchess liked the name and was anxious for the operation, what did nature's real object in producing the growth matter?

Haigg was beginning to forget that he was tired, when someone entered the room. He continued to work without looking up, for he had given instructions that, no matter how urgent the business, he would see no one.

"I'm not going to apologise for disturbing you —if I were to disturb you more often I might save your life."

Haigg swung round then and looked at his visitor with the nearest approach to a smile his face was capable of. "Another discovery, Janson? Sit down; you can smoke here—I can't."

"Nonsense!—a cigarette would do you good."
Haigg folded his hands and closed his eyes for a second. "If I once started I should never stop.

Well, what have you come to worry me about?"

Janson lit a cigarette before he spoke, and inhaled the tobacco with keen pleasure, the pleasure only a man who has control over his desires

experiences. He was an older man than Haigg, though his face possessed more youth; his eyes were dark blue, his hair brown, fine and thin; sensitive nostrils, cleanly cut mouth, and determined jaws. He was tall and thin, yet gracefully built; and his voice, though softer and more pleasing than a woman's, thrilled the listener. It was a voice that commanded—in a whisper.

"I've half a dozen reasons for calling."

"One will satisfy me—though I hope that one isn't gratitude."

Janson shrugged his shoulders and blew a cloud of smoke thoughtfully towards the ceiling. "I have no reason to be grateful to you—rather the opposite. You and your clique help me to starve respectably. I don't mind starvation much, but I'm damned if I can stand respectability!"

"You're a fool; I sent you a good half a dozen patients last week."

Janson groaned. "Yes, confound you, and wasted six good hours of my time. I don't believe I've ever examined six healthier women; the only things that were diseased were their minds, and I always refuse mental cases."

Haigg yawned. "Well, what on earth do you want?"

Janson rose and walked up and down the room with his hands clasped lightly behind his back, his head poked forward, stooping. At last he paused

before Haigg, and, taking the cigarette from his mouth, threw it away.

"I want some of your cases," he said in a soft voice, which vibrated earnestly. "Brooke, give me one of these women who have something the matter with them; give me one of the cases you are forced to reject and allow other fellows to experiment on; give me one of your women who come to you labelled *incurable*; give me the most malignant cancer, the most vicious fibroid, and let me prove——"

Haigg rose and held up his hand. "Let you prove the immorality of operations!—let you prove that every disease and growth that can be cured, can be cured without recourse to the knife!" He spoke contemptuously. "Janson, if you're not careful how you ride this hobby-horse of yours, it'll break your neck. If you were to talk to other men as you sometimes talk to me, they would call you a madman—a renegade. You are mad."

- "Is honesty insanity?"
- "Under certain conditions, yes."
- "The conditions our profession imposes—eh?"

There was no bitterness in Janson's voice; he scarcely spoke above a whisper. His eyes remained blue and serene; only the lines about his mouth tightened and the squareness of his jaws was intensified.

"You might have been at the top of the tree

now," Haigg continued. "I want a rival; I'm growing tired of having everything my own way. It's a filthy business to be the fashion. You might have been that rival. Why, I remember one of the first big operations you undertook, it created quite a stir at the time; I remember the specimen you exhibited before the British Gynæcological Society, and the paper you read."

Janson nodded. "And the patient died—fifteen months after; she might have lived fifteen years."

"You ought never to have entered the profession," Haigg said coldly; "but having entered it, it's not nice of you to kick. You have a distorted vision: you can't see things clearly. One day, if you're not careful, you'll come a cropper. It's all very well to air your theories, beliefs, and dislikes within four walls, but if you start putting pen to paper and threaten—"

"I have put pen to paper, and I'm not afraid of the result. Because we've got a licence to murder, I think the public ought to know how and why we murder." He checked himself suddenly and lit another cigarette. "It's really rather humorous my talking like this to you—you of all men—you, the high priest of the Medical Hierarchy!"

Haigg slipped into his chair again. "Go on, it amuses me; though if you were not an old friend I should kick you into the street."

Janson smiled. "I wonder if our friendship will stand the strain of my book when it's published," he said. "That's really why I came to-night: I wanted you to have a look at the proofs. For I'm in earnest, Haigg; I'm hitting hard, and naturally I hit you. When I read my own book it seemed to me as if you were the only man I was hitting, and I was half inclined to chuck the thing into the fire—to chuck my profession and clear out. I suppose you won't believe it -or perhaps you won't understand-but I love my profession, old man, as keenly as you"—his voice sank below a whisper—"perhaps more keenly. I love life, and, by God! I can't see it hacked and destroyed any longer as we've been hacking and destroying it. I don't believe we realise our responsibility. It is so easy to take away - but, Haigg, we can't replace, can we? It's so fascinating to experiment; there's always the lure of a great discovery that may benefit humanity. And I ask myself every night if we medical men do benefit humanity in any way."

"If you talk like that I shall kick you into the street," Haigg grunted.

"Give a savage a surgeon and a medicine chest, and instead of recovering as he does now, when he's half disembowelled and hewn to pieces, he'll die. Sunshine's the only physician, and you know it."

Haigg rested his head against the back of his

chair and closed his eyes. "Instead of talking nonsense and boring me to death, I wish you would take me out to dinner and amuse me. Is there a place in London where one can dine decently without meeting women who are eating and lacing themselves into our consulting rooms?"

Janson smiled. "After dinner I'll show you a woman who'll make you envious. I think she must be a savage—the most beautiful I've seen."

"What's wrong with her?"

"Nothing; that's why I should like you to see her, you'd be so jealous of nature. She's dancing at the Alhambra, and has created a sensation."

"For goodness' sake, take me," Haigg yawned. "If she can give me a sensation, I'll give her anything she likes to ask."

HAIGG acknowledged that he had not really dined for weeks. The menu exerted a strange fascination over him. Of all men he was probably the least greedy, yet he lingered over the name of each dish, and won the respect of the head waiter.

"I suppose I shall pay for this," he said with a sigh as the fish arrived. "Yet there are men and women who do it every night of their lives."

"Three times a day," Janson grinned. "Aren't you grateful?"

Haigg laid down his knife and fork, held his wine to the light, then looked over the glass at his friend. "One word of shop, and I leave you."

Janson nodded. "It's awfully difficult to escape from it, isn't it? This crowd—look at it! You and I don't see individuals, do we? That bunch of pretty girls at the table half-hidden in roses, they're merely a collection of glands, tissues, and probably malignant growths; and the two young fools with them, who have ordered the champagne

to be iced, little dream that we shall soon be ordering them to be packed in ice, too!"

Haigg half rose from his seat. "Damn you—shut up! Has the devil got hold of you to-night—or what?"

Janson laughed; but it was a mirthless performance. "We are just as self-centred as actors, aren't we?—and nearly as nervous. Shall I tell you about my wonderful dancer?"

"No, I'm going to see her—that's enough; probably it will be too much. Don't talk, eat! I want to be amused, not bored."

Janson shrugged his shoulders and attacked the fish. "Does this place amuse you?"

"For the moment, vastly. It's the world"— Janson nodded, he understood—"sheep and wolves. The respectable half of London comes to look at the other half, because it likes to think it's vicious. Knightsbridge and Kensington sneer at Aholibah Mansions, forgetting that the occupants of the latter go to bed every night in an elevator. They would rather watch the results of the Established Church and the established dressmaker than listen to you."

Janson again nodded, and ate his dinner in silence. He was almost unconscious of the uproar that always accompanied society's gastronomic feats; he abandoned himself to study the gastronomists. He envied them just a little; their lives were short, he knew, but merry. They raced

through every emotion nature has discovered, as they raced through every course the art of the cook has invented. Overhead, violins and cellos made music, which they tried to drown with unmusical voices: everything animate and inanimate combined together to make Noise.

The knives and forks chattered to the plates; the wine whispered sensuously as it bubbled against the glasses; not a human tongue was still for a moment; petticoats rustled, and lace whispered beneath the table-cloth as limbs moved restlessly, and jewels rattled on women's arms; even the waiters, though shod with silence, whispered breathlessly as they hurried to and fro; and outside in the streets, London shrieked with the countless voices the devilish art of man has invented.

Haigg laid down his knife and fork, emptied his glass, and leaned back in his chair; he looked at the red lights flickering on every table, the scarlet flowers, the diamonds advertising the women's breasts, the bored faces advertising the men's alcoholic heads, the rare fruits piled on the side-tables advertising the advantages of free trade. "Phew, what a mess!"

"What a noise!"

Haigg grinned; his eyes were as red now as the lights dancing through the shaded candle. "No wonder I'm popular; I can understand, now, what a relief to women pain must be after pleasure."

Janson passed his hand across his eyes and took a long breath. "Yet I feel I would like to take a hand at the game. After all, it's life; these people live on emotions—"

"And alcohol."

"Well, they have to feed emotions. We don't get one emotion in twenty-four hours. You, Haigg, you have never known fear; I don't suppose you've ever known hate; and I'll lay a hundred to one you have never even had a nodding acquaintance with love."

"Never had time."

"What you have missed! And as for passion——"

Haigg again held up his hand to the light as he had done an hour or two ago in his study. The long fingers were steady; there was not a tremor. It was like a hand carved in marble—or it might have been fashioned from steel.

"Perhaps I know more of love and passion than you think," he said quietly; "though it's not human, thank God!"

As he spoke, a man and woman seated themselves at the adjoining table. It was the only vacant table in the room, and Janson had looked at it curiously once or twice, for the red roses in the centre were beautiful: the bronze candelabra held waxen candles instead of electric light.

The woman's back was towards the table where the two men sat, but Janson recognised her and laid his hand on Haigg's arm. "That is she."

"Who?" Haigg did not turn; he was choosing a cigar. Janson waited until he had cut and lit it.

"Your next victim—if you will!"

"What the devil——" Haigg stopped abruptly as he looked at her, and Janson saw something more than casual interest in his eyes. "What's her name?"

"Faustine Noyada." Haigg nodded, folded his hands, and leant his elbows on the table and looked the woman up and down. Only her back was visible: a cloud of black skirt, relieved by a touch of purple where it was raised from the ground, disclosing her petticoat. Beneath the chair her feet could be seen—they were small though long and narrow, - silk stockings, and soft black shoes fastened with gold buckles. Her dress was cut very low behind, and her arms and shoulders bare, save for straps of ribbon. She wore no jewels around her throat, only a barbaric comb in her hair: that was gold too, roughly cut, inset with pearls and turquoises. Her hair was almost black, but where the high-lights fell dull gold glistened.

There were masses of this wonderful hair, yet at first one was not conscious of the amount, only

of the colour; it was so illusive, this black with the bronze showing through. It was full of life; it seemed to quiver as if it were a snake that had curled itself above the woman's forehead.

Though London continued to shriek outside, the noise in the restaurant diminished. Where the music had failed Faustine succeeded. Having seen her face, her hair, her bosom, the long limbs vaguely outlined by the black dress, the gastronomists wanted to hear the woman's voice. They put their glasses quietly on the table; they moved their chairs and turned their heads and stared: not rudely, but because admiration compelled them, and wonder and surprise, combined with some emotion that was akin to fear.

This woman—what was she? each asked the other. She was typical of something, but whether it were good or evil no one dared say; for no one in that restaurant had really ever met good or evil: they had only played in the nursery of passion, and cried at the scratches they received.

Haigg was breathing quickly; for the first time since he had undertaken his first operation his pulse was abnormal and his heart-beats accelerated.

"What did you say her name was?"

"Faustine."

"She dances?"

Janson nodded.

Haigg rested his face between his hands. "You

are right; she is wonderful—a woman at last! Where the devil did she come from?"

"Perhaps a little joke of his Satanic Majesty."

Janson smiled.

"A joke someone will have to pay for."

Haigg was silent for a long time; his cigar died, his coffee grew cold, his eyes grew red. He kept them fastened on the bronze hair, on the white shoulders, now and again glancing at the feet and ankles visible beneath the strip of purple.

"I suppose when she turns round we shall see Satan's humour—a poor jest."

As he spoke the woman turned; perhaps she heard him. She looked at him; their eyes met. Hers were a deep sea-green, shaped as the Egyptians' were, when Joseph set future generations an example in the cornering of cereals. Shaped like an Egyptian's was her face, the chin a little firmer and stronger, the nose more straight, and perhaps the nostrils more sensitive, as delicate as the nostrils of a well-bred horse. Her mouth was not small, but the lips were luxurious. It was a mouth that demanded food, wine, kisses—all three, and yet something else which was nameless.

One thought to read the woman's whole character in her mouth, until one again looked into her eyes. They contradicted all the lips said and desired: they possessed the eternal wisdom,

and wrath, and peace which the seas contain. They asked the everlasting questions which poets would have us believe the waves ask ceaselessly of the shore. They were as deep as the unplumbed depths of oceans. They were as kind, and certainly they might be as cruel. They were equally hungry; they were insatiable.

They looked into Haigg's eyes, and instantly he saw the command flash across the intervening space: "Give!"

He sat upright in his chair and folded his arms. Just habit, perhaps, or the instinct of self-preservation: but his attitude was refusal. He continued to look at her, but avoiding her eyes; health glowed on her cheeks, and the only crime he could find her guilty of was a little powder; her eyebrows were almost straight, darker than her hair, her ears small and set low; her brows low too, and level, not hidden by the masses of bronze. Her neck was like a marble pillar, and her shoulders powerful. Her dress fitted closely beneath her arms; though it emphasised the soft skin, the round breasts, yet Worth himself could not have called it daring; its simplicity denied the indignant glance of the immorally virtuous. Even the hypocrites and Pharisees crowding the room would, had she suddenly stripped herself bare, have bowed their knees rather than their heads.

Tongues were clattering again, glasses jangling,

wine bubbling, music and petticoats whispering their secrets. Haigg called for fresh coffee and another cigar.

"Brandy's the safest poison"—he smiled; help yourself, but don't talk."

He smoked with half-closed eyes, from which the colour had nearly fled: he looked neither right nor left now, but stared into space over the heads of the people. After a while Janson suggested they should go, but Haigg shook his head: he refused to rise until the woman left the restaurant. Then, for the first time, he looked at the man who accompanied her, a big muscular Englishman, with the village church and a quiverful of children in the background.

"You are right," Haigg said under his breath to Janson, "she can dance—by God, she's wonderful!"

"You have not seen her yet."

"I've seen enough to know she doesn't get rid of all the passion and energy she possesses, by burrowing in the world's pig-bucket. She's alive, Janson. She's the first living woman I've seen since I started——"

"As the aide-de-camp to Death," Janson suggested, as they stepped into a cab.

#### Ш

HAIGG wanted a box at the Alhambra, but Janson insisted on the stalls. "You cannot see her properly from a box."

They arrived in time to see the curtain fall on a ballet, and to witness a clever turn by a troop of acrobats, two men and one woman, who performed tricks with their bodies that made even Brooke Haigg envious.

"I'd like to have the smaller man of the two on the operating table!" he sighed. "Marvellous!"

The curtain fell, and there was a short wait: Faustine Noyada's number appeared. Haigg glanced at the programme:

" The Dance of the Sea."

"Doesn't sound exciting."

"Wait." The curtain ascended: a backcloth with a purple sea fading into a mist; a sense of vacuity and distance was obtained by the use of gauzes. The music commenced; it was reminiscent of Grieg. Restful, yet

ever and again sounding a warning note of coming storm. Again Haigg glanced at the programme:

"Dance invented and arranged by Sigismund Noyada."

"Who's he? She can't have a husband."

Silence suddenly fell on the theatre; Faustine was on the stage. She looked taller than she had done in the restaurant, and slimmer; otherwise she was unchanged. Footlights could not destroy her beauty; nothing could intensify She walked quietly into the centre the stage and stood still, looking at the audience. She wore a pale green dress, which fell from her shoulders, completely enveloping her, giving no hint of the form it hid; the hair was loose and fell to her waist. Stooping, she lifted her skirts free of the ground and commenced to dance. Her stockings were green, her shoes also, and they were fastened with large pearls; a string of pearls was around her neck.

She moved slowly at first, and her draperies floated as she moved to and fro. She danced slowly, with the rhythmical motion of a waltz. Her dress, clinging to her limbs, but refusing to reveal them, made a soft sound, like the sound of waves breaking on a beach. The music, which had started pianissimo, increased as the

dance progressed; the stage was brilliantly lighted by green and purple lights.

At first the audience gazed listlessly, moved only by the woman's beauty, disappointed by the woman's dress. Some of the onlookers appreciated the melody, some the poetry of motion.

Faster and faster Faustine danced. She commenced as if almost asleep, but, watching her closely, Haigg noticed that her eyes grew larger and opened wide; her lips, which had been closed, gradually parted.

Wider and wider flew her draperies, faster and faster moved her feet; but only those long narrow feet were visible, and now and again the curve of tiny ankles. Her hair floated jealously like a bronze-coloured cloud about her shoulders; her petticoats disclosed no single curve.

With a sudden crescendo of music, darkness filled the stage; a few seconds, and the dancer appeared again; only, the lights were changed and her green draperies had disappeared. She was dressed in purple, and the sea picture behind her looked dark and vague. The music was angry, full of discordant notes. The woman's arms and neck were bare; a collar of pearls was clasped tightly around the pillar of throat. Her shoes and stockings were purple. And now, as she danced more wildly and less rhythmically, a suggestion of eager limbs—

delicate curves that made the blood of the onlookers warm. Crashing through the music came the sound of sea waves; like wind, her petticoats, as she danced with increasing abandon.

Haigg sat back in his chair and clasped his hands together tightly. Again his breath was coming quickly; again his pulse was abnormal; again he was conscious that his heart was beating with unusual strength. Glancing at him, Janson noticed that his eyes were like red flames. The woman, as she danced, looked in his direction. Her eyes seemed larger than ever: in the green was a suggestion of blue. Her hair blew about her more wildly, guarding her less jealously; her purple dress clung more tightly, revealing, only to hide, some delightful curve.

And then once again the music crashed, and darkness came. And when it disappeared the stage was only partially lit and the background of sea looked threatening. Wild and threatening Faustine looked too: her dress was black; it fell like strands of black seaweed, reaching barely to her ankles; it left her arms quite bare, and the whiteness of her bosom against the dark background was startling. And when she danced now it was the dance of the sea, storm-tossed to frenzy. Her hair no longer fell about her arms and shoulders: it hovered a thunder-cloud above her head, and the gold was like lightning playing through it; her dress became no more

than seaweed blown by the wind, concealing no longer a single curve of her body.

It was beautiful—and appalling. It was a woman giving herself to a lover. . . .

When the curtain fell Haigg drew his breath. As the footlights flashed again, he smilingly held out his hands before him; then dropped them suddenly, for the fingers were quivering.

BOTH men rose simultaneously; without speaking a word each read the other's thoughts. Neither had any inclination to watch any woman after Faustine. They did not leave the theatre, but walked upstairs and crossed the promenade. Here was noise again, only of a stealthy kind.

"I think I must drink." Haigg spoke. "That woman's dance has made me thirsty. No," as Janson moved towards the bar, "we won't go there—let us sit here, in the corner, at this table; I want to watch the play."

"People will tread on our toes, and we can't see the stage," Janson objected.

With a motion of his hand Haigg embraced the promenade. "That stage and this play is enough.
... By Jove, how quickly it has taken my thirst away!—Coffee, I think, and I must smoke a cigarette."

Crossing his legs he leaned back, and with halfclosed eyes looked at the passing show.

"Wonderful, isn't it?" Janson grunted.

"Yes, when one hasn't seen it for a long time. Why do they do it? Savages don't."

"We are Christians."

Haigg locked his hands together. "What an insult to Christ!"

Janson looked at him curiously and frowned. "And yet if you had gone into the Church you would have cheerfully made a cross, every day of your life, and hammered a nail through the hands of the Eternal Mother."

Haigg laughed. "Of course, it would have been my business, and a man must be thorough. But why make religion and love a business? Everybody hasn't the time or the temperament to be a priest or a married woman."

They smoked without talking for a while; the ceaseless clatter and chatter echoed on all sides. Below in the orchestra men fiddled; on the stage girls pirouetted and smiled, swaying in the limelight, making brilliant patches of colour like clusters of flowers in a well-ordered garden, their slim black limbs the stalks, their flimsy skirts the petals.

A woman on the promenade passed and repassed the table where the two men sat, several times; then, suddenly drawing a chair forward, she seated herself, and, leaning her gloved arms on the table, looked at Haigg, strangely enough without smiling at him. They took no notice of her, but after a moment's hesitation Janson called the waiter.

"Thanks," the woman said, scarcely glancing at him: "liqueur brandy." She waited until it arrived, then she stretched out her hand and touched Haigg.

"You are Brooke Haigg, aren't you?"

"Yes-but I don't know you."

She laughed. Her voice was harsh but not unpleasing; it was like the string of a violin that has been played upon too often, become frayed, and threatens to snap. "You ought to know me! You spent six hours with me one hot summer afternoon in the St Juggernaut Hospital. . . . How I slept, and, my God, how I dreamed!" Again she laughed, folded her gloved hands together and rested her chin upon them, and looked at Haigg with eyes that had suddenly lost their cunning. "I owe you something, if only for those dreams you gave me and that long sleep. I've never slept so well since."

"I don't remember you," Haigg repeated brusquely.

For a moment the woman veiled her eyes, and her painted lips quivered. But she laughed again—that was from habit.

"Don't you remember carving me like a trussed chicken? I remember—quite a dear boy told me afterwards—he was a medical student or something—that you read a paper about me. I ought to have died and I didn't, and so they put a lot of little letters after your name and made a

fuss about you. I believe I started the fashion, didn't I, in——"

Haigg leant forward, interrupting her: "Yes, I remember you now." He ran his fingers through his hair. "By Jove, that was a long, long time ago—and you are still alive!"

The woman nodded. "Funny, isn't it?"

"Yes," Haigg replied gravely: "you ought to have died."

"You are grateful!"

"Aren't you sorry you didn't die?"

The woman shrugged her shoulders. "I'm all right. I don't see it makes much difference either way . . . . food for the worms or food for man. But the dream was best of all."

Haigg rose. "Come along, Janson, I've had enough of this."

The woman rose also. "I did you a good turn; you can do me one now—lend me a fiver. Surely fame at a fiver isn't expensive!"

Haigg turned his back on her. "I saved your life for nothing," he said carelessly as he moved away. But Janson hesitated for a moment; then, nervously taking all the gold he could find in his pocket, he slipped it into the woman's hand.

"I don't want it," she stammered.

"You may," he said awkwardly, "and you can pay me back, you know, when your ship comes home."

He hurried after Haigg, and found him fuming at the exit.

"It's really disgraceful that I should be pestered like this," he heard him saying to an excitable foreigner, who looked a cross between a trapeze artist and an anarchist.

Janson slipped his arm through his friend's and tried to drag him away, but the stranger pursued.

"You must pardon me," the latter stammered in bad English, waving a typewritten letter in Haigg's face, "but I have written you twice, and this is the answer I have received."

"Then write again—I've never heard such infernal impudence!"

"I don't know your laws or etiquette," the little man pleaded . . . . "but it is my wife—she is the most marvellous. If you only knew her you would see her—she will interest you—yes, deeply. For you are the great Brooke Haigg—they told me so." He again waved the letter in the air. "I don't want no consultations with no physicians—it is you and you only she can see."

Haigg possessed self-restraint, but he almost lost his temper now.

"Confound it!" He turned to a burly official. But the foreigner refused to be frightened away; he forced a card into Haigg's hand. "She is such a great artist," he pleaded, "you cannot refuse; and you have seen her to-night. You cannot refuse!"

Janson stepped forward and laid his hand on Haigg's shoulder. "Faustine's husband," he whispered.

Immediately Haigg stopped and confronted the little man; he read the name on the crumpled slip of pasteboard—" Sigismund Noyada." Then he took the letter and glanced at it; it had been written by his secretary.

"I am not a consulting physician: that is why you received this letter. I don't give advice. Anyway, your behaviour is unpardonable."

"When you have seen her, you will pardon." Sigismund spoke humbly.

Haigg pushed his way through the crowd into Leicester Square; the foreigner followed. "It is some strange, unknown disease that is eating her life away. There are moments when she suffers—mon Dieu, how she suffers! She will see no one; but she will see you—I can persuade her . . . . To-morrow—say you will see her to-morrow. Money, that is nothing—"

"Impossible!" Haigg strode quickly along, stooping slightly, his head poked forward, his brows knit. His face was expressionless; it wore a mask. Beneath the mask war was being waged. Some emotions, too long kennelled and kept on the chain, had broken loose and galloped with the warm blood through the surgeon's veins. He tried to restrain them: it was un-English

and unprofessional to be influenced by anything save duty, religion, and duly licensed epitaphs. The little man who hurried by his side was a devil in disguise, tempting him to a monstrous crime—the murder of etiquette.

It was the woman, who, an hour ago, had danced youth into his brain and desire into his body, the first live woman he had seen! . . . It would be interesting to discover how she and nature quarrelled. It was difficult to believe that the curse was upon her. Haigg was tempted to question the cringing figure on his right; but on his left strode Janson, and so he held his tongue until Janson spoke. And then he remembered that the physician held etiquette lightly, laughed scornfully at the Medical Hierarchy and the Surgical Oligarchy.

If he refused this woman, Janson might take her—Janson, with his handful of theories, his galvanic batteries, his vaccines and sera.

"Any hour you like to mention; if not tomorrow, any day!"

Haigg remained silent, his lips compressed tightly.

"The sooner the better, for though she has at last promised, she may change her mind."

They reached Piccadilly Circus now, a medley of horses, human beings, motors, and mud. Haigg stood on the edge of the pavement and looked up Regent Street towards Oddenino's.

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She was wonderful and she was beautiful: he would not deny that. Still, she was only a woman, and he was so tired of women. Yet—— He began to breathe quickly. A yellow haze hovered above the houses; the air was heavy with a pungent, sooty odour. Haigg closed his eyes and conjured a vision.

Faustine the dancer lying asleep, stretched on the table before him: a woman like all other women, only God had been generous and nature prodigal. There was nothing new under the sun, and yet—— His fingers closed around the weapon that had brought him fame. Nature was a great inventor when her laws were broken. Brooke Haigg had, with her aid, discovered and invented terrible things. Perhaps Faustine the dancer might help him to a new discovery.

"Shall I see her for you, old man?"

Janson's voice frightened the vision away. Haigg opened his eyes as a puff of wind sent the yellow mists circling round the Circus. He looked at Noyada:

"To-morrow—nine o'clock: let her come alone."

Then he stepped off the pavement and walked towards the restaurant where he had dined. Janson looked at him in amazement as he entered Oddenino's.

"Surely you can't eat again? And supper!"

"I'm hungry, and this place amuses me."

He refused to talk; he sat with folded hands watching the people as they entered. There were few onlookers at the tables now; they were all busily employed in playing the game. Few knew what they ate; still fewer tasted what they drank.

Haigg had said he was hungry, but he only played with each course. Again there was one table with empty chairs, and Janson began to realise that Haigg came hoping to see Faustine. He was not disappointed: she entered just as the clock pointed to half-past eleven, accompanied by two men. She was wearing a French theatre-gown that was almost the colour of her eyes; a large picture-hat with one black feather which fell to her shoulders. Her shoes and stockings matched her dress; it was cut high, with short sleeves.

She sat down, facing Haigg, and again their eyes met. Her expression had changed since dinner: an air of exhaustion was about her, making her attractive in a different way. She expressed lassitude; when she moved it was langourously. Her eyes never once opened wide. A few hours ago they had fiercely demanded; now it was as if the demand had been satisfied.

Janson, looking at her, was conscious of the animal: he saw a resemblance to the tigress who has been fed, and, satisfied, waits to curl its limbs in luxurious sleep. The men talked volubly; Faustine listened. Janson wondered if she heard what they said.

He leant across the table and whispered to Haigg: "Evidently the husband is not, but she is well supplied with lovers."

Haigg stiffened: his brows met. "You fool, she has nothing to give lovers, or husband. She gave herself to-night to us, to all men, in her dance."

Janson nodded; he said no more until Faustine had gone. And they too rose to go. "And so you will see her to-morrow at nine o'clock?... I wonder what you'll say to one another."

Haigg was silent. Janson spoke again, when he bade him good-night. "I'd like to know the result of your interview. If you think it necessary to——"

Haigg smiled and held up his hand. "Would you be a poet, Janson, and rhyme Faustine with —with vaccine?"

#### CHAPTER V

HAIGG awoke the following morning feeling vaguely disturbed. At first he thought it was due to dining and supping, but he quickly discovered that his well-trained stomach had, without any regard to the etiquette of the profession, done its duty exceedingly well. It was his mind that was unbalanced.

At an hour approaching midnight he had, in the middle of Piccadilly Circus, made an appointment for a professional dancer for nine o'clock that morning, and he now felt afraid he had acted unprofessionally and foolishly.

It was excellent wine Janson had ordered, yet it must have been the wine! In his bath he made up his mind he would find a suitable excuse for not seeing her. When he was dressed he decided he would see her, and disillusion her and himself. He knew how she would look by daylight: the powder very thick and probably a soupçon of rouge. The hair he had thought wonderful would tell the secret of its colouring,

would look untidy. She would be over-dressed, covered with jewels, and, without doubt, smell of garlic.

Haigg looked at his breakfast: coffee, a slice of toast, and fruit. He merely ate an apple, sipped the coffee, and then shut himself in his study. There was still time to ring up Janson on the telephone and pass the woman over to him; but the thought of Janson prevented him putting the idea into execution. There would be no harm in seeing her. He had long ago learnt the art of dismissing women, and he could afford to waste five minutes of the long day.

Yet when nine o'clock struck he wondered what had induced him, the high priest of his profession, to such an unprofessional act of schoolboy folly.

It was unlikely that Faustine Noyada—the name alone would have caused any self-respecting British front door to close automatically—was one of nature's freaks or possessed one of nature's unknown secrets: Haigg would have heard of her. His fame was world-wide, and France, Germany, and America, in return for like favours, would have sent her to him.

Haigg attended automatically to his correspondence. His secretary did not notice anything unusual in his manner, though, instead of sitting, he walked up and down the room. He found himself longing for a cigarette. Now he rarely smoked,

and never until after dinner. He could hardly blame Faustine for this phenomenon; nevertheless he did, and when the hands of the clock pointed to nine-fifteen he gave a grunt of satisfaction.

The woman was only a dancer, and possessed neither time nor inclination to juggle with life and death. At nine-thirty the bulk of his correspondence was nearly finished, and he felt both disappointed and annoyed that the appointment had not been kept.

Now that he knew Faustine would not come—for no woman would dare keep him waiting half an hour—the momentary feeling of relief he had experienced at a quarter-past nine disappeared. He unlocked a drawer in the bureau, took out his cigarette case, opened it, and fingered a cigarette, but resisted the temptation. At half-past ten he had arranged to visit his private nursing home; at eleven-thirty and twelve-thirty, the two cases he had operated on the previous day. At two o'clock the Duchess of Languidt's operation.

He continued to walk up and down his room. He was wasting time, and he began to grow irritable; but his brain had taken a vivid photograph of Faustine's dance, and with closed eyes he was staring intently at it. It was a quarter to ten when his servant opened the door and announced Madame Noyada. Automatically Haigg replied that she had missed her appointment—no one who had kept him waiting five minutes was likely

to see him! But no sooner had he spoken than he contradicted himself.

Faustine entered the room. As she did so, Haigg pulled the curtains wide apart, opened the window, and stood with his back to it, so that, though the sun might miss him, it fell on the woman's face. He pointed to a straight-back chair, but she avoided it and dropped into the only one that had any suggestion of comfort.

It was not comfortable, and her attitude showed it, for she moved to right and left and fidgeted with the cushions until she had placed them to her satisfaction. Then she looked at Haigg, and he sat down abruptly, drawing his chair close to the bureau. By accident his hand touched the cigarette-case, and, picking it up, he put it in the drawer quickly. Faustine noticed the action, and smiled.

"You want to smoke, but you are afraid to? I don't object; I would like a cigarette too, if you would give me one."

Haigg smiled drily. "I am afraid we can't smoke here." He folded his arms and looked through Faustine rather than at her. "Your husband, I believe, wrote desiring a consultation with me. I met him by accident last night, and I promised to see you this morning. But I am afraid you don't quite understand—"

She interrupted him with a movement of her hands—they were long and narrow like her feet;

black gloves rolled above her elbows. Her dress, well cut, could not have been more simple. Haigg could not discover any jewellery.

"I do quite understand," she said, speaking

"I do quite understand," she said, speaking slowly, with an accent which, though un-English, was difficult to trace; her voice sounded deeper than it had done in the restaurant, and less frayed. "My husband, he is excitable, impulsive. You see, he manages all my business, and he wants to manage my life too; but no, my life is my own, and, I say, life is so short, why worry about it?—a day more or less—pouff! what does it matter?"

"Tell me, what advice have you taken?—who have you seen?"

Faustine laughed. "I have never taken advice; I have never seen a doctor—though I remember, long ago in Paris, there was one who said he would die of love for me. But he altered his mind, and killed his patients instead."

Haigg frowned; he was going to find it difficult to keep his mask on. This woman brought with her into the room an atmosphere he had never breathed before. He pushed his chair back towards the window, but she smiled, and he started guiltily. She thought he was afraid of her; possibly she had fooled so many men, she thought she could fool him.

As a rule, Haigg had no difficulty in talking to his patients—in asking the stereotyped questions and forcing answers. He possessed the remark-

able gift of making people say what he wished them to say, and condensing half an hour's interview into the space of ten minutes. Words eluded him now—his thoughts were not under control: he met a will as strong as his own.

"Do you kill your patients?"

Haigg rose and closed the window; the faint hum of life from the streets irritated him. He could not concentrate his thoughts; instead of asking questions he was being questioned.

"You must please tell me," he said in the cold voice that had fascinated many women, and lured both those in search of health and those in search of excitement to eventual destruction—"tell me what——"

Again she interrupted. "Will you kill me?"
"My dear madam, if you talk like that——"

Suddenly she drew her chair close to his, and, leaning forward, looked at him. "It is a fair question, and I want to know. I said, a day more or less, what does it matter? But still, one wants to know. If I die to-morrow, then I feast to-night. When I go out I want to go out with the drums beating, the trumpets blaring, the wine bubbling over the glass. I want to go out with kisses on my lips, and roses. . . . You don't understand?"

She hesitated a second, and her eyes opened wide as they had done when she danced. "Ah! but I believe you do understand; you are not

all steel as you pretend. . . . Well, listen, and I'll tell you all I know of myself and what I sometimes feel."

Haigg glanced at the clock. "I'm afraid I've not much time."

"There is the whole day." She smiled. "Yes, if I ask, you will give me the whole day. . . . I suppose women come to you trembling, and obey as they would a priest. What they would not give their dearest—their husbands, or their lovers —they give you. In their eyes, you possess unknown, unholy power; you wield life and death, so they kneel down at your altar and bare themselves—giving body and soul. Pouff! I am not one of those; I wanted to see you—you the man, not you the artist, or-what you call it?-surgeon priest? I think I have seen you—so quickly, eh? That is my way! I saw you last night. The first time I did not know who you were, but I knew you were a man who commanded—you were not one of the crowd."

It was Haigg's duty to feel impatient. "Will you please tell me, briefly——"

She interrupted him again with a movement of her hands. "Yes, I will tell you. . . . Listen."

It was nearly eleven o'clock when Faustine left Bruton Street. Brooke Haigg saw her into the motor-car himself, and then, returning to his study, he gave instructions he should not be disturbed, and locked the door. The atmosphere

the dancer had brought still lingered in the room. Haigg stood for a time, his hands clasped behind his back. Every now and again he inhaled the illusive perfume. His eyes were brilliant, his nostrils distended, the fingers of his powerful hands locked together.

Presently he threw himself into the chair at his bureau and lit a cigarette.

"Do you kill your patients?" He laughed as he repeated her question to himself, and smoked quickly.

" Will you kill me?"

He flung away his cigarette, and, rising, walked up and down the room. The clock struck eleven. He heard, but took no notice. He walked up and down, to and fro. The sunlight diffused itself through the stained-glass windows, throwing a kaleidoscope of colour about the room: purples, reds, and greens. With his head poked forward Haigg saw the colours pursuing him; the green was the deep sea-green of her eyes; whichever way he looked he saw them.

And he saw red too.

"Will you kill me?" He laughed, and lit another cigarette. Many women had survived operations nearly as severe as the one he might be tempted to perform on Faustine Noyada.

There was a case on record of a girl who had completely recovered.

But there was a greater risk in this operation.

It would be one that no one had ever attempted—a chance that might not come again in a lifetime—a woman whose name at the moment was in the mouth of the world; a woman famous for her beauty, famous for her wonderful dancing, famous for the love she received—and, some few whispered, never gave.

Famous or infamous, that mattered not to Brooke Haigg. What mattered, was the fame he would receive, he and his profession. . . . He, the high priest, might perform the miracle of the century. Here in his hands Fate had placed a perfectly shaped body and, save for one thing, a perfectly healthy woman, threatened by some, as yet, small but terrible growth.

What it exactly was, Haigg suspected no physician or surgeon in the world could say, until they had probed and cut, seen and examined it: possibly not then.

The colours on the carpet danced before his eyes and blinded him; they trembled on the walls and ceiling too. Haigg drew the curtains; the room was in semi-darkness. He smoked fiercely.

What was one life, more or less? For many years he had juggled with life—successfully too. If it had been any other woman he knew he would not have hesitated, and this knowledge stunned him.

And Faustine Noyada was only a dancer, whose

fate was bounded by a row of footlights or the favour of a prince's bed.

Brooke Haigg had read poetry before he commenced seriously to read obstetrics. Some lines from the former floated through his brain now:—

> "God said let him who wins her, take And keep Faustine . . . ."

#### CHAPTER VI

Harge found time to visit his two latest martyrs to the fashion in surgery. They were progressing satisfactorily, and doing their duty in that state in which it had pleased the famous surgeon to place them. For the inconvenience and the pain which they suffered they could console themselves with the reflection that, though they and nature might be the losers, science benefited: they might even achieve fame in the pages of a bluebook.

Their friends consoled them with hot-house flowers, and letters of congratulation or condolence—according to the point of view of the writer. But, best of all, Haigg smiled when he examined his handiwork; and they knew he was pleased, grateful even, that they had considerately survived the ordeal. So, if they lost their lives, they were repaid by the knowledge that they had won the approval of the greatest surgeon of the century.

Remembering the dinner he had eaten and the

supper he had played with, Haigg made his lunch of a little fruit and a glass of claret, and he gave himself half an hour's rest before the Duchess of Languidt's operation. The man of steel had never experienced the pleasurable sensation of feeling nervous; but when the Duchess was more or less peacefully travelling to the realm of sleep guided by an anæsthetic, he felt a trifle anxious. His hands were steady enough, so was his pulse, but his thoughts played truant. Even in the midst of his fascinating work, whilst he was asking a miracle of nature that the world might give him fame, whilst he prodded death with a knife, a vision of Faustine the dancer rose before his eyes: but her flying draperies were no longer purple they were red, and her feet left scarlet footprints on the ground.

He was grateful when he had finished: he felt exhausted. And instead of going back to Bruton Street, he motored through Richmond Park, was twice stopped by the police for exceeding the speed limit, and returned as the sun sank behind a stack of chimney-pots into a bed of mist-coloured red with bars of purple and a cloud of fog that trembled into waves of dull green.

He found Janson waiting for him in his rooms. "You've seen her," the latter said quietly, though there was a trace of anxiety in his voice. "Well—what did you find?"

Haigg purposely misunderstood him; quite

mechanically he extracted a cigarette from his case and lit it before he replied. "Of course—and the operation was entirely successful."

"I was referring to the dancer, not the Duchess. And, by the way, I've brought you the proofs of my book."

Haigg yawned. "Hope you don't expect me to read them."

"I think you ought to. Are you afraid of looking at both sides of the question? I've read every paper you've written and every lecture you've given."

Haigg fingered Janson's proof-sheets thoughtfully.

"And this is the result! My dear fellow, I don't like the look of it." He read paragraphs here and there quickly. "Why, this is written for the street, not for the study. What are you doing, Janson?"

"My duty. That sounds like a cheap retort, I know. It's the only answer I can give, and if an apology is necessary it's my apology—because, you see, I feel I am attacking you. Read it or not, as you like, but don't discuss it now. I want to hear about Faustine."

Haigg looked at Janson steadily. "She didn't express a desire that I should consult with anyone."

Janson walked to the end of the room and back again. "Perhaps I deserve it."

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There was silence for a while. The shadows were lengthening; the lamps were being lit in the streets, making the twilight ghostly and painting the city a scarlet hue.

"I think I shall operate," Haigg said quietly.
... "She's an interesting phenomenon."

Janson walked the room again. He folded his arms across his breast; his head was thrown well back.

"I've sent her to Moir-Brown; I'm expecting to see him to-night."

Janson started, and his expression changed; his features softened. "Old Pill Brown?" He smiled. "I'm glad. I didn't know you had any respect for his opinion."

"He used to send me some interesting cases, and it's just his opinion I do respect, not his pills."

Janson shrugged his shoulders. "Well, I'll say good night. . . . She's—she's a beautiful creature, Haigg; it would be a pity if anything happened to prevent——"

"To prevent Monsieur Noyada making a fortune out of her dancing," Haigg interrupted.

"Didn't you say last night that the dance was her lover?"

"Surely nothing so poetical or so foolish."

"Don't you think that she enjoys life, then?"

"So I suppose does a flea when he hops. Enjoyment is an accident that may happen

to any living atom whilst it is fulfilling its destiny."

"Oh Lord!" Janson groaned as he held out his hand.

But Haigg refused to take it. "Don't go; stay with me and share my dinner—a lump of raw meat, but it'll do you good. You want blood, Janson. Perhaps you shall hear what Moir-Brown's got to say." He laughed. "All right, I advise a consultation—we three men, all chasing the same butterfly but each with a different net, to decide on the fate of the incomparable Faustine. Shall she be stabbed by me, poisoned by Moir-Brown, or electrocuted by you?"

"I don't think I'll stay," Janson said. He spoke wearily, and contradicted himself by sitting down.

"Don't you ever laugh at yourself? You're lacking a sense of humour. Take my advice, and don't publish your book. By the way, if you do publish it you know the charge you're laying yourself open to—and the risk you run?"

Janson nodded. "Yes, I do; but—damn the book!"

"I most assuredly shall."

They divided the underdone steak and ate it in silence; each man drank a glass of claret and Janson lit a cigarette, but Haigg resisted the temptation for an hour. Half-past nine arrived,

and Moir-Brown rang up the surgeon on the telephone and told him he would come at half-past ten.

"He works twice as hard as I do, and earns a quarter of the income," Haigg yawned. "Across the majority of his prescriptions is written Starvation is your cure; they insist on being drugged and robbed in Homburg."

It was twenty minutes to eleven when the physician arrived, and he apologised profusely for being ten minutes late. "As a matter of fact, I took a taxi-cab from the Alhambra."

"Has Faustine lured the respectable married man and the father of ten to the Alhambra?" Haigg laughed, holding out his cigarette-case.

Moir-Brown produced a small briar pipe and filled it. "I prefer this if you don't mind—always one before I go to bed." He lit it. "Yes, she lured me to the Alhambra, though I didn't tell her I was going. I took my wife and five of my ten children. By the way, Haigg, I've grand news: I hope ere long to be able to confess to an eleventh. But this Faustine is the most fascinating woman I've ever seen."

"You say that!"

"Yes, and I told my wife so, and she agreed with me; the children are all madly in love with her. She insisted on seeing them. There are seven at home, you know, and it was the prettiest sight imaginable to watch her playing with them."

Janson smiled and Haigg frowned. "Playing with them! I didn't send her to you to play with your children."

Moir-Brown laughed cheerfully and puffed his pipe with frank enjoyment. "But that was after the examination." He glanced at Janson.

Haigg nodded. "You can take this as a consultation."

Moir-Brown was a man just past the prime of life; he was stoutly built; his hair was almost white, his face clean-shaven, and his features rugged. He was not a handsome man, but he was pleasing to look upon; hard work had left many lines upon his face, and though it was the face of an optimist, yet one who was observant would have noticed in the eyes—they were almost hazel—weariness; sometimes disappointment could be read there. His bearing was that of a soldier who waged a hopeless war against an enemy whose legions were without number—a soldier who refused to be beaten, but who knew that death would come before victory.

He put down his pipe when he discussed Madame Noyada's case; unconsciously his manner and his voice both underwent a change. Mechanically he buckled on his armour, sharpened his wits, and, never weary of the hopeless war, described the enemy he had met—its strength, its aspect, its behaviour, and the tactics it would probably pursue—which he had seen when to

# THE BUTCHER OF BRUTON STREET him Faustine had come and acknowledged the curse.

But he knew when he had finished he had told the surgeon practically nothing. He had only told him that the foe was hidden where no man might dislodge him, and that to grapple with him would surely mean an encounter with death.

#### CHAPTER VII

"Then you advise operation?" Brooke Haigg said judicially. It was a statement rather than a question.

Moir-Brown refilled his pipe and glanced at Janson. "What do you think?"

Janson moved irritably; he had been smoking cigarettes quickly. He hesitated before replying. "I haven't examined Madame Noyada," he said coldly, "but from what I've heard, I should say an operation would be—criminal. There's a growth—neither of you know what it is—oh, of course, you've your suspicions and theories; but, if you want to experiment, the hospitals are all full."

Moir-Brown looked shocked. "My dear fellow----"

Silence fell suddenly between the three men. Moir-Brown puffed at his pipe, but his face was cloudy. Janson put down his cigarette, and stared across the room. After a while, Haigg rose and mixed himself a lemon-squash; Moir-Brown took a whisky-and-soda; Janson refused both.

"I'm going to turn you out now." It was Haigg who spoke first.

Janson rose. "You won't operate!"

Haigg sipped his drink. "Why not?" Moir-Brown was noisily knocking out his pipe.

"Because I say an operation is unnecessary; because to use the knife has become a mania with you; because Faustine Noyada is perfectly healthy and perfectly normal; and because—because I forbid it."

Haigg turned his head and smiled apologetically at Moir-Brown; then he laid his hand on Janson's shoulder. "You have been over-working lately at that wretched book of yours. Forgive me for using an Americanism; but remembering we are friends, hadn't you better forget it?"

"I know what I'm saying, and I mean all I say." Janson spoke vehemently; his face was flushed, and the veins stood out on his forehead. "You forget but for me you would never have seen this woman, and I've known her for over a year."

Haigg merely raised his eyebrows.

"I first saw her when I was in Paris fifteen months ago, studying Drillot's system. She was dancing at the Marigny, and for the first time in my life I knew that I had seen a perfect specimen of feminine beauty . . . . perfect development, perfect health; a human animal, if you like, but a perfect animal."

"Yes, yes, I understand; but this has nothing to do with the question." Haigg held out his hand. "Good night, old man."

"No, you've got to hear me. We three have known each other a good many years, and surely you need not be afraid of the truth. Etiquette damned hypocrisy! let's chuck it aside for the moment and be, for a Godly-second, honest men."

Haigg sighed, and, shrugging his shoulders, leant against the wall; the physician advanced a little nearer the two men.

"Janson, you are excited," he said. "Why not wait until to-morrow morning, and then talk this over with Haigg? If Madame Noyada is a friend of yours, I am sure he will be glad to hear what you have to say."

"She's not a friend of mine," Janson continued stoutly. "I've never spoken to her, save once to mumble half a dozen words in bad French. Of course, she didn't even recognise me the other night; but I never miss an opportunity of seeing her. I've made a study of her. I can't expect you fellows to understand, but she is more than just wonderful—she's a great woman! Her work is her life; if you rob her of that, and don't happen to kill her, you'll let a devil loose on the world. . . . Do you remember Swinburne's Faustine, the Faustine of Rome in the height of its glory and its shame? Well, she lives again in Madame Noyada."

"How interesting! I believe you're right," Haigg said.

"If you hadn't been blind you'd have seen that the other evening. You would have seen all the passion and delight that modern civilisation and centuries of bloodless Christianity have succeeded in robbing the modern woman of. Faustine is imperial; she doesn't only possess the poetry of motion and the poetry of passion, but nightly she whips the half-dead desires of the world to life. She's the last specimen left of the original woman; if she had a chance, she would make men, even of such as you and me. If she gave to a nation of men what she gives to her dance, she could spur that nation to conquer the world. She palpitates with life; in her veins is blood; in every other woman's, water. . . . And you, like a miserable little ornithologist with a specimen gun, would kill her, dissect and stick her in your museum of horrors with a label!"

He turned away and poured himself out a whisky-and-soda; Haigg remained leaning against the wall watching him with a smile. He held out his hand again.

"Good night, my fiery poet; when I've caught this specimen, I'll tell you whether you were right or not."

"Good night," Janson replied, without turning his head.

He hurried into the street, and found the physician by his side. "Are you walking?" the latter asked.

Janson nodded.

"What you tell me about this woman is very interesting; the moment she entered the consulting room I felt I had met her before—in a previous existence, perhaps." Moir-Brown smiled. "She was not a stranger, for I recognised her voice instantly; it was like—what shall I say?—like music heard centuries ago and forgotten. She stirred me strangely, Janson. And then, those extraordinary green eyes—they are green, aren't they? Looking into them one fancied, if one looked long enough, one might read the secret of life. It was like looking into the sea: no one could plumb their depths."

Janson stopped beneath a gas lamp and looked at the physician.

"So you felt it too? You know I'm not mad, then?... Will you permit this—sacrifice?"

Moir-Brown hesitatingly suggested that Janson somewhat exaggerated the danger of the operation; and, having reached his own house, no more was said between the two men.

The next night found Janson seated in a box at the Alhambra. Week after week he went, and watched the woman dance; each night he entered the theatre dreading lest he should see her name removed from the programme. Then one day the

last nights of the famous dancer were announced; and the temptation which had pursued him was victorious.

He wrote to her, and a few days later he was allowed to call on her. She occupied a small suite of rooms in a foreign quarter of the town; Janson, who did not know his London, suddenly felt as if he had been transported across the English Channel.

The street was narrow, filled with children with black eyes and dark hair, olive skins, and soft voices; small shops overflowing with provisions temptingly displayed; no one was in a hurry, and everyone moved quietly. At every corner a distinctive perfume assailed the nostrils; sometimes it was of garlic, sometimes reminiscent of red wine, or occasionally the scent of the flowers of the South.

He climbed the stairs and reached her rooms, breathless. Faustine greeted him as if she had known him all her life.

"You wonder why I stay here, when there are such nice hotels; but if you will forgive the confession, I do not like your English people—when they are together in a crowd. I tried many hotels and many streets, but wherever I went I heard the rustling of the virtuous silk petticoat, and all day long church bells ringing and the men saying damn and blast—and other words no prettier. You see, I have not any religion, so it got on my nerves."

Janson nodded. "It gets on mine sometimes." Faustine continued. "It's funny, but I have never met an Englishman who wanted to pull a church bell or say blast when he was alone. They only get religious when they crowd together. . . . But how nice of you to come to see me! we have been friends such a long time, I have often wanted to meet you."

"Do you really mean that?"

Faustine frowned. "Never ask me that again; I always mean what I say, good or bad. You like dancing, eh?"

"And you?"

"Ma foi, it is my life. If I did not dance I should—kill—myself, and others probably."

"I knew that. And I suppose you've been called neurotic?"

"Your friend, the Brooke Haigg, said so."

"He is my friend; but I sometimes hate him," Janson replied quietly.

Faustine did not look at all surprised. She smiled, and Janson mentally compared her lips to a cup of red wine.

"Why do you hate him?"

"Because of you."

Faustine rose, and, walking to the window, leaned out. "I wish the evening would come quickly," she said under her breath. "It's time I danced."

She left Janson alone with the silence for a

little while; when she came back from the window he spoke.

"If you didn't dance, what would you do?"

It was not a smile now that moved her lips; it was something evil. She leant suddenly towards him: "Don't you know?—I have already told you."

She leaned back again and coiled herself in a large chair, burying her head in the cushions; her voice was like the first breeze in the pine-tops that heralds the coming storm.

"When I dance I give myself to centuries of lovers who died in the Roman circus that I might live . . . . they all come back to me, and call to me with their lusty voices; through the mist that rises between me and the audience I see their straining muscles and their limbs tangled in the net . . . . and I hold out my hands, and lift them up to drink life. I hear the music and the clash of steel, and the roar of wild beasts and the song of the gladiators. I dance dead faces, dead passions, dead desires to life again. . . . And, when it is over, I am no more: as limp and lifeless as your English girls. . . . And then I sleep, and dream that one day all these lovers will really come to life and claim me, and somewhere together we shall lay the foundations of another empire."

She slipped from her chair, and, opening a tobacco-box, commenced to roll a cigarette.

"Why did you come to see me? It was foolish of you."

"I came on a rather peculiar errand; that it's unprofessional, I don't care a bit. We discussed you some time ago—Haigg, Moir-Brown, and I. You are going to allow him to undertake a dangerous operation?"

She shrugged her shoulders.

"He says, if I do not, I shall soon find myself unable to dance; I shall lie on my back all day long and look at the ceiling. Mon Dieu! the only ceiling I should ever look at would be the cover of my coffin. No, no, it's life and death anyway, so I give myself to Brooke Haigg. He is a great man. . . . Though he is so small, he is strong and cunning, n'est pas? I fancy, centuries ago, leaning down from my seat in the circus I saw him bravely hack two lions they pitted him against; he conquered them and dragged them, still living, to my feet. But I was thirsty for love and blood, and demanded more. And—well, he will have his chance now!"

Janson leaned forward and took the cigarette Faustine offered, and she lit it for him. "Why do you play pitch and toss with your life?" he asked. "There is no proof that an operation's necessary."

"I can't afford to wait for proof. That would mean I must—and what I must, I will not."

Janson was breathing quickly. "I might be able to cure you."

Faustine shook her head. "Yours is chance . . . . and why should you care?"

"Because I love you."

He made this confession as calmly as if he had been giving one of his patients a decision.

Faustine threw away her cigarette and again walked to the window; each time she moved she scattered an invisible fragrance, like dust, in the air. Janson was striving for self-control; this elusive perfume she exuded filled his lungs and entered into his blood.

"Yes," she whispered, leaning out of the window, "and I might love you—if it were not for my dance—for a week, a month, a year—a long time, perhaps. But, if I did, it would be terrible."

Janson shook his head. "I'm tired already of jogging through life in a donkey-cart; I prefer one wild rush in the chariot—and catastrophe."

"Then you know why I go to Brooke Haigg? I am nearly thirty. If I were to grow old—oh—la! la!"

"You'll die by inches either way."

Faustine laughed, and flung herself on the ground at his feet. "No, you do not know the Brooke Haigg as well as I do. Have you not seen his eyes? Not by inches—but so!" She made a quick movement with her hand as if she were stabbing with a dagger. "Besides, I have never suffered—I have only watched others. I am not afraid

of pain: only when it interferes with pleasure . . . . and I should like it at the hands of a strong man." She rose and held out both her hands. "And now you must go, mon ami, for it is getting late and I am better left alone. Tonight is the last time I dance—perhaps the last time I ever dance. You will come and watch me? I shall give all, all I possess. The Brooke Haigg will be there; I am going to dance to him." She opened her hands. "I shall hold him—so, as he hopes to hold me; but no anæsthetic will send him to sleep, and I shall make him writhe."

"And afterwards?"

Faustine shrugged her shoulders. "He insists on a week's rest: he is mad. A week's rest, and not one single night with La Danse!"

"What will you do?"

"I do not know; do not ask me. I warned him, but he only smiled."

Janson walked towards the door. "I shall come to you on Monday."

Faustine laughed, and watched him from the window. "Monday may be too late."

"Then I shall come to-morrow. Shall I motor you away from English bells and English oaths into the heart of the country and silence?"

Faustine nodded. "That might be good, if we were to go very, very fast, and never stop until we came back. But what will the——"

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"The butcher say? He'll have his say at the end of the week, Faustine—perhaps."

Janson ran quickly down the stairs. As he walked across the street he looked up at the house and saw her leaning out of the window; she waved to him, and the little children playing in the gutter saw her, and they called to her in the soft French and Italian tongues, and, forgetting Janson, she called back, and blew them kisses.

Janson hailed a cab and told the man to drive to Bruton Street.

#### VIII

As Janson dismissed the cab he was accosted by Monsieur Sigismund Noyada. He stared at the small Frenchman without answering his greeting. As a matter of fact, he had forgotten his existence, and his presence was an unpleasant reminder that the woman whom he had promised to carry away from English oaths and church bells possessed a husband.

"You will pardon me, but we have met before?"

Janson nodded. "You are Faustine's hus-

It was quite natural that he should call her by her Christian name; it was the name the world knew—it was public property; any man was at liberty to use it—it was as light as her dance. Janson realised this as he realised the husband; and the realisation did not bring satisfaction.

Though possessing many un-English virtues, Janson was insular enough to wonder what un-

happy circumstances had forced Faustine into marrying this untidy alien; at the same time he felt guilty, and reminded himself he had behaved like a cad—if Noyada really were Faustine's husband. But looking at the man, and remembering the woman, it seemed impossible. Nevertheless, he ought to have made sure; for he had told her he loved her. He knew that she probably heard the same confession two or three times a day; it was quite harmless, and only English or American women with unpleasant minds would object to it.

To confess love is a crime; to make love, a pastime. A thief is always preferred above a beggar, and truth is as indecent as a bishop without an apron: the latter hides a multitude of dinners which might have fed the beggar.

"Perhaps I am detaining you," Noyada said apologetically. "You are going to see Mr Haigg. Another day—perhaps to-morrow—you can spare me an hour?"

Janson felt more uncomfortable. His confession of love had been perfectly harmless, he knew that; for half an hour he had escaped from England and his thirty odd years, and had found himself in a foreign town, a youth with only one desire in the world: to worship strength and beauty, and believe in both. But at the same time, Bruton Street made him brutally British again.

"You wish to speak to me professionally?"

The alien was not quite at his ease. "Yes—that is to say, I would like your advice. You must forgive me if I trespass—I do not quite know the etiquette of your profession; but I should be grateful if only for a friendly chat. Of course I know your time is valuable," he added hastily, "and I should not dream of taking it without——" He made an expressive gesture, which in pantomime gracefully expressed his desire to pay.

Janson wished foreigners were not so polite; the good breeding of the lowest alien always put the English-speaking race at such a disadvantage. He would have preferred to deal with an American even, who would have thought, spoken, and eaten in dollars, and whose wife, if not emulating Cæsar's, would at least have kept a bishop in the background, and have known the rules of the divorce court and the registry office by heart.

"I suppose you wish to talk to me about your wife; but I understood from her this afternoon that Mr Haigg had agreed to operate."

Noyada nodded. "That is true, but at the last moment I grow afraid. She has no fear; she does not understand, or she does not care—but then she is not human. You say you saw her this afternoon? I am glad of that. Do you think she is strong enough to stand the operation?

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do you think, whether it is a success or not, she will recover quickly and dance again?"

"My dear sir," Janson said abruptly, "you are asking me questions which not only etiquette forbids my answering, but which common-sense should tell you are practically unanswerable. I have only met Madame Noyada as—a friend." He wondered whether he ought to have said lover.

"That is why your opinion would be invaluable. You see her as she is—human, a woman, beautiful, fascinating. Haigg, Moir-Brown—these great men only see a case. She arouses their professional instincts, and she arouses your—what you call it?—you have no word in English."

Janson smiled; he found himself walking beside the Frenchman away from Bruton Street. Professional etiquette—what was it after all? Etiquette killed more men than medicine; in his heart Janson despised it, and began to grow suspicious lest he were a moral coward. Up to the last moment he had hesitated before allowing his book to go to the Press; soon it would be published, and he foresaw the result. It would kill his friendship with Haigg; very possibly it would ruin him professionally. It tore the aprons from the bishops, priests, and deacons of the medical hierarchy, and gave the public a glimpse of the stomachs of surgeons fattened by enormous fees; it showed the evils of certain operations, some of which

were no more than interesting experiments; it exhibited the charnel-house attached to every hospital filled with limbs of men and women, many of which might have been saved. And, by the searchlight which it threw, the epitaphs of countless tombstones throughout the kingdom were translated:

"Here lyeth the body of Sarah Fashion, who met her death at the hand of the knife, in the year of our Lord.

# " Ad referendum!"

"When's the operation fixed for?" Janson asked abruptly.

"To-day week—if it is done; and she goes into Brooke Haigg's nursing home on Wednesday or Thursday."

Janson noticed a tremor in the little man's voice. "If? There can be no doubt about it, if Haigg has made up his mind?"

"But I can alter my mind. It is I who decide, not Brooke Haigg."

"Then what about your wife—can't she alter her mind?"

Noyada shrugged his shoulders. "Not unless I persuade her. And as the time approaches I grow nervous; I am filled with doubts. . . . But then I know he is a very great man, this Brooke Haigg—the surgeon of the century; is it not so?"

Janson nodded. "Oh yes, he has carved a

reputation which a century will hardly obliterate.
. . . Are you afraid, Monsieur Noyada?"

The Frenchman glanced at his companion; he was striding along quickly, and Noyada had almost to run to keep pace with him. "Would you not feel fear if she were your wife? Mon Dieu! sometimes I wake in the night and find myself shivering with fear."

"You love her, then, dearly?" The question came so naturally it did not seem impertinent.

"Love—" Noyada spread out his hands. "Oh, that is a strange word! Over here I do not quite understand its translation. No, I do not suppose I love her, or only a little more or a little less than you Englishmen love. Mais, mon enfant, I have a dream. . . . Come back with me and dine, and I will tell you my dream, for somehow I think you will understand, and then perhaps you will help to save Faustine."

"I can't do that," Janson replied roughly. "You have chosen Brooke Haigg; he's a surgeon, I'm not; or rather, I have forsaken the knife."

"You don't believe-"

"Oh yes, great things have been done, and great things will be done, with its aid. Many lives have been saved by operations, but, unfortunately, many have been lost. You see, medicine is like religion—all a matter of pounds, shillings, and pence."

Janson hesitated before climbing the dark staircase to the Noyadas' flat, for he wondered whether he ought to accept the hospitality of Faustine's husband. But the children playing in the streets reminded him that here, in the heart of London, he was nevertheless on foreign soil. And so he mounted for the second time.

Faustine had already left for the theatre. Noyada shrugged his shoulders. "Oh yes, she goes very early. She takes much time to dress, and when she is dressed she lies down and smokes a cigarette and dreams. And as she dreams so she dances."

Janson ate the small but perfectly-cooked dinner silently. Noyada chattered—about himself and his wife; about the world: countries Janson had not visited, cities and people he had only met in books. The Frenchman discussed art, politics, literature, until Janson felt surprised at his own ignorance. This despised alien had brains and a soul far superior to those possessed by the average Englishman; he kept his fingers continually on the pulse of life, and knew just how it beat in all corners of the earth.

Not until the meal was finished and Noyada himself had made the coffee, did he again refer to his wife. Janson was tempted to ask the name of his cook, and the Frenchman's eyes beamed appreciation of the compliment.

"It is a girl my wife picked up in a Paris café;

she was—what shall I say?—understudying for a fille de joie, but in a misunderstanding with a friend she received a nasty wound in her face, which spoilt her beauty—and so she ministers to the stomach instead of to the heart." Noyada sighed. "She is a good girl."

Janson sighed too. "You're a queer people, you French; I'm hanged if I can understand you."

"Ah! you English want to understand everything. You do understand everything except yourselves—that is why you are so miserable."

Janson laughed. "I suppose if we understood ourselves we should all find ourselves in a lunatic asylum; at present only about fifty per cent. of us get there." He sipped his coffee and watched Noyada roll a cigarette. He did not do it as gracefully as Faustine.

"I wish we English could cook," Janson said grimly. . . . "But you were going to talk about——"

Noyada interrupted him with a gesture; then he lit his cigarette and leaned back in his chair. The room was almost in darkness: two wax candles burned on the table, and daylight had disappeared. The window was open, and from the street below sounds rose and fell intermittently. London sang in the distance, and the distance softened her voice. The only sounds that came clearly were un-English, like the room in which still lingered the atmosphere of Faustine—the

scent of her body, the perfume of her hair, the invisible dust like the dust of crushed flowers which, whenever she moved, floated like a cloud.

Janson was conscious that Noyada was watching him; when he broke the silence he scarcely spoke above a whisper.

"I was born in Italy though both my parents are French, so the blood of the South runs in my veins. When I met Faustine, she was little more than a child, and I was still young. Instantly I loved her with the passion of youth. I was doing well for myself in the world, and she had not been discovered, and her parents were glad for her to marry me. She had no word in the matter, and did not know what love was." He smiled curiously and blew a cloud of tobacco smoke, hiding his face. "I was young and did not understand her . . . . our marriage was hardly a success. . . . When I took her roughly in my arms and demanded love, she gave me—"

Noyada made a strange quick gesture with his hand, and Janson could easily imagine the knife flashing in the air. It was just such a gesture that Faustine had used.

"So she stabbed me: not with her lips, but with the knife," Noyada continued. "That was all she gave me on our bridal night." He shrugged his shoulders. "Que voulez-vous? It was my fault; I know better now—but now I must wait."

"I don't quite understand," Janson said, as he leaned across the table.

"No one knew. . . . We had quarrelled, that was all, and we parted for five, six—I forget how many years. There are plenty of women in Italy, I said—idiot that I was. I did not know there was only one Faustine. And so she was never really mine."

Janson lit another cigarette. "My God!"

"Yes, I said that! But I amused myself. Life runs smoothly in our country, monsieur; women are more kind than in your country; and though perhaps there are more funerals—that's the penalty of passion, n'est ce pas?—there are also more flowers."

"Go on."

The alien grinned. "I knew I should interest you. The next time I saw my wife—remember, monsieur, in spite of all I have told you, she is my wife—she was dancing in a cabaret in Paris. Then, perhaps, I knew what I had lost. I rushed on to the stage; I claimed her before them all, and carried her off. Ah! I was careful; I did not risk the stiletto again. The first time she missed my heart by an inch; the second time I knew she would make sure."

Janson laughed, but he checked himself quickly. "I was not afraid. I hope I am a brave man. But life is pleasant—and Faustine!—I saw what I had lost. . . . I have what you call the business

instinct, and, seeing she had no love for me, I conquered passion and, instead, threw myself heart and soul into helping her achieve success." He spread out his hands proudly, yet with dignity. "You see what I have done: her fame is worldwide, her name on everyone's lips. I have seen princes offering their homage. You think I exaggerate; what you do not understand over here, you despise. Was I not jealous, you say? Oh, I have conquered all that; besides, I know Faustine. It is her dance she loves; whilst she dances she has no joy in lovers. When they are clever she is amused; when they will talk to her and she is bonne camarade, they give her emotions passions too, and all—all she expresses in her dance. And when that is over, she is too tired to worry about love; that is where I have the laugh of them all—I who am nothing. They all despise me. 'Pouff! what is he?' they say. 'One who waits,' I reply, so softly that they cannot hear."

"So she is faithful to you?" Janson, too, spoke in a whisper now.

"Faithful!" Noyada jumped to his feet, his voice vibrated, his hands trembled as they gesticulated. "You ask that, and you have seen her dance! Faithful! and every night when the music that I wrote for her trembles on the violin, she feels the kisses of unknown lovers on her lips—she gives herself to passions which you

have not dreamed of! But what has that to do with me? She is great; she is no ordinary woman . . . . and I—I say I can wait."

"What are you waiting for?"

Noyada sat down again; the expression on his face changed as he rolled and lit a cigarette. It became cunning.

"She is extravagant, is Faustine—she does not know the meaning of money; and, though she despises it, yet it slips through her fingers like water and I find it difficult to save, though her salary a queen might envy. My one vice is a cigarette; my one extravagance a bottle of good wine. I spend nothing; that is why they despise me for my shabby clothes, my boots that lack shape, my hat that grows dusty."

He nodded his head and, leaning back, smiled with half-closed eyes. "Ah! but far away in Italy, my Italy, on the slope of a hill where one can see the grapes ripening in the sun, where trees give grateful shade all day, and through their branches show the blue sea, there is a little house I build, something like your English farm, with roses looking in at the windows. I sit at my door and smoke my cigarette, and watch the grapes ripening and listen to the sea from far away, as it whispers. . . . And then, suddenly, when the sun drops out of sight and night comes—black like Faustine's hair, quivering with golden stars—perhaps I yawn and throw away my cigarette and

look up, and there, at the window where the roses are, I see her face. She leans out, and the red petals are like blood against her bare breast, where she struck me with the knife—eh? now she has no knife, and she beckons me to her, and I go up and I close the door, fast. And then I laugh at those men who were rich and princely and knelt at her feet and offered gold for kisses, and I stand at the window with her, and I cry out: 'Come, all of you, and look at me now, Sigismund Novada, who stood outside the stagedoor in the mud, in shapeless boots and dusty hat -untidy, dirty alien-eh, what? Come and see what your Faustine has to give me! It is not the knife now that strikes at my heart when I hold her in my arms. . . . Though my lips are red, it is not with blood—they are red with her kisses. . . . '"

Janson rose and walked unsteadily to the window, and leaned far out. He wanted to see London and to hear it—to know that he was neither dreaming nor in some strange country.

But from Noyada's window London looked blurred. It was as unreal and illusive as his thoughts. It held in its heart, where the light burnt most fiercely, Faustine the dancer.

# IX

THE theatre was quite full: people overflowed into the lounge.

The stalls shone with bald heads and dyed heads, and powdered necks and enamelled breasts. The grand monde sat in the stalls and boxes to bid Faustine au revoir, and the demi-monde leaned from the lounges, and each world looked at the half to which it did not belong with envy, pity, hatred, and all uncharitableness.

"Wonderful, isn't it?" Janson yawned.

Noyada shrugged his shoulders. "C'est la vie, mon ami. C'est tout!"

"It's the very devil, I think."

"Hush!" Noyada writhed in his stall. The curtain had risen, and Faustine was on the stage. There was a burst of applause, then silence.

"Ma foi, but she will surprise them to-night!" the alien whispered. "There is a look in her face I have seen but twice before—once when she gave me the stiletto instead of her lips."

To Janson's surprise, Faustine was not dressed

as she had been a few nights ago. She was wearing an ordinary evening gown, with a black picture-hat, black gloves, black shoes and stockings. It was not what he expected. She did not look like a dancer: rather a charming woman of the world—reserved, quiet, almost demure.

And she sang a harmless little peasant lovesong, about flowers and butterflies and blue skies and youthful lovers. Her voice was not remarkable, save for a strange mixture of harshness and gentleness. It was like the whisper of wind in pine-trees, only suggesting to the old wayfarer the coming of a storm. As a matter of course, she was encored, and she replied with an Italian song, the words of which only two per cent. of the audience could translate. But her voice and her face helped the ignorant to an inner meaning of the lyric.

She used no gestures, save once to raise her petticoats a few inches.

Janson moved uneasily, and the little alien glanced at him.

"You understand Italian?"

"No-but it's hardly necessary, is it?"

Noyada shrugged his shoulders. "She is mad to-night," he whispered, his voice shaking unsteadily. "It is not a song for English ears. Mon Dieu! if they understood!"

Janson saw a change in Faustine too. Looking through his glasses he noticed that her eyes were

a different colour from that which they had been when she had talked to him a few hours ago. They were angry: seas no longer green or blue, but black and storm-tossed.

Now and again she glanced at a certain box on the right, and, following her gaze, Janson saw Haigg there, partially concealed by the curtains.

He began to understand; she was singing to him. Presently she would dance for him. It was her hour. In a week's time he, the greatest surgeon, would have her in his power under the anæsthetic; now she had him in her power, under an anæsthetic too. He, in a week's time, would probe her body with a knife; now she was probing his with a weapon more deadly.

She was fast forgetting the theatre and the audience; she was herself two thousand years ago—splendid, barbaric, and brutal, wielding the power women then possessed, burning incense at the altar of Love. Janson, remembering their conversation, began to fear what she might do. He could feel that Noyada was afraid too.

"Have you ever seen her so before?"

The alien's lips were twitching and his hands working convulsively. Janson realised that Noyada could be roused to jealousy in spite of his late boast.

"She is mad," he muttered. And then followed a string of strange oaths.

As she finished singing she commenced to

dance, just touching the hem of her petticoats. A waltz at first, poetically sensuous and pleasing. The tempo increased; so did her abandon.

Not her voice now, but her flying petticoats, the wind in the pine-trees. An odour of pines seemed to permeate the theatre too, and sting the nostrils of the audience.

In an instant, ere they knew it, the storm was upon the onlookers. It came so suddenly they had no time to be appalled, nor thought to be shocked; they were swept off their moral outlook, and carried away by the dance; they gasped, and held their breath.

Faustine laughed once. They scarcely heard that. The foam of pink petticoats beneath the black thunder-cloud of skirt blew above their heads . . . higher—higher. The slim, black-stockinged limbs were like the stems of the pines bending before the hurricane, half-hidden by twin white clouds . . . and sometimes, between the blue and white, pink flesh.

The flying foam blinded; the pine scent stupefied; the limbs, swaying beneath the twin billows of white, lured.

Faster—wilder. For an instant those living limbs straightened, quivered, curving to an undulating snow-capped plateau.

Then all was lost in the falling foam of pink; the clouds descended. The music drifted away into a wail of despair, and Faustine the dancer

was standing quite still, smiling, clothed in her simple black gown, her picture-hat, and her long black gloves.

And the curtain fell.

When the grand monde was tired of applauding, it went out to eat. Then it found time to be shocked.

But Haigg remained a long time seated in his box. Faustine had probed deeply—and found the weak spot.

Noyada suggested that Janson should accompany him to Faustine's dressing-room; but Janson refused. He would see her to-morrow, she had promised to motor with him—and he told Noyada what he had arranged.

The little alien shrugged his shoulders. "Fresh air will do her good, but, my friend, do not go too fast. Faustine has no fear!"

So Janson went home alone. He wanted to keep the picture he had seen of Faustine the dancer that evening. Perhaps it was not altogether a pleasant picture, but it was wonderful. She had stirred him deeply, but he was still uncertain what part of his nature she had stirred.

To the average Englishman in the stalls whose business is trade, and who, following the lead of his American cousin — twice removed — is unable to think except in the coin of the realm, doubtless Faustine seemed to trade on her beauty and her sex. They, composed of two parts cal-

culating machine and one part animal, were attracted by Faustine merely as animals, and they quite failed to see the spiritual side of her dance. Janson almost lost sight of it, but he instinctively felt that she possessed and gave something more than mere beauty of form and colouring: something more than desire and passion. They were the dominant notes of her dance, and mingled with them were other notes, faint and subdued perhaps, but from which sprang the harmony.

She had fascinated with the flesh, and Janson made no attempt to shut his eyes to the truth; but with it there was also a spiritual lure—a call from the Unknown. And perhaps that was the real secret of the power she possessed.

For she was an undoubted power. Both men and women acknowledged it, and not a child that she passed in the street but turned his head and smiled; and when she smiled in reply, the little eyes beamed, the little feet danced, and the little heart was glad.

When Janson reached his rooms he did not go to bed, but he smoked many pipes. Faustine, indeed, had probed him deeply: unwittingly, perhaps, she had probed through his body and reached his soul—for such we call The Thing that forces us to keep our heads above the cesspool for some odd sixty or seventy years of human existence.

It was no business of his, he told himself savagely, as he sucked his briar; nevertheless, it seemed a pity that so unique a creature as Faustine the dancer should be wasted—or sacrificed. Perhaps the sacrifice were best. Perhaps some inkling of what otherwise her end would be had already come to Faustine, and that was why she was willing to play the part of a stray terrier dog and give herself to the vivisector.

Janson smiled as he knocked out his fifth pipe and filled another: he smiled at the absurdity of his thoughts; for the last that had come to him was—what a splendid maker of men Faustine might be, the mother who might save a crumbling nation.

A maker of men! Janson might indeed laugh at his thoughts, for the sisters and wives of the human calculating machines supping at the Carlton or the Savoy, were even then discussing her as a destroyer of their male chattels.

But Faustine herself had returned home, refusing to see a single visitor at the theatre—refusing to see even her husband. She had closed and locked the door of her apartments, enjoyed for a few minutes the luxury of a steaming bath, and then, as tired and as sleepy as a child, had curled herself up between perfumed sheets and fallen into dreamless sleep.

Janson's motor throbbed impatiently in the street beneath her windows before she was awake.

Her French maid apologised profusely as she showed him into the room where he had supped with Noyada. "I will wake her at once; she will not keep monsieur long."

But Janson, collecting the strange assortment of foreign and English newspapers, sat down by the window, and, smiling wisely, told the woman not to disturb her mistress.

"Leave her until she wakes of her own accord; then you can tell her the motor and I are here," he said. "There is no hurry; the sun will shine for another six or seven hours."

The woman nodded. "And sleep is almost as good as sunshine, is it not, monsieur?"

It was past mid-day before Faustine awoke, bathed, dressed, and came to Janson. The words of the Frenchwoman rose to his own lips:—the sun had shone for Faustine in her sleep; the dew had touched her hair and eyes. She was as fresh and fragrant as a field of lillies at daybreak. Janson wanted to take her in his arms and crush some of the fragrance to himself so that he might keep it always—to steal some of the youth and health that throbbed in her veins and made her skin glow. It was difficult at first to recognise Faustine of the previous evening.

An unjust philosopher once justly said, that it is woman's clothes men love, and not the woman. If so, this is the reason men can as easily change their affections. If a sack were the universal

adornment of the sex, man without doubt would be the most faithful of all animals, and many charming women would die unloved and unknown. They are fully aware of this fact, and so the birds and beasts suffer.

Under cross-examination Janson would have been quite unable to describe what Faustine wore: only his spirit was conscious; and fortunately the soul has no voice—or what a chatter there would be in the world! But he was pleasantly conscious of outward and visible signs of inward physical beauty. He was conscious, when she took her seat beside him, of pleasant warmth and pleasant perfume. He gripped the steering-wheel with unnecessary vigour, and he was glad the traffic made prisoner of his senses. He risked police traps and stop-watches; and presently the keen wind from the fields and hills whipped their faces and sang gratefully in their ears. As far possible he avoided main roads, made the first steep hill an excuse to look at, and listen to, Faustine.

"Lean back, and get some minutes' peace;
Let your head lean
Back to the shoulder with its fleece
Of locks, Faustine."

Faustine looked up, raised her eyebrows, and the laughter left her eyes. "You don't read Swinburne, do you?"

"I used to. I should now, if I had time."

She dug her fingers into the sable at her throat. "Are you so busy too, doing the same thing the Brooke Haigg does—only differently?"

Janson's jaws met, and he bent forward to change the speed. "I don't cut——"

"You inject," she interrupted quickly; "same result?"

"Not quite."

She shrugged her shoulders. "Of course you each have a theory; you each believe the other is wrong. Would you bore little holes in people and inject little messes, and pump electricity into them, if they didn't pay you for it? If it were possible to be honest, and you really wanted to heal, would you not build an enormous garage, fill it with motor-cars, and lend them to your sick that they might go out and find the sun and the air, and a chance of really being cured?"

Janson grinned, changed the speed again, and again looked at Faustine. She was quite serious. "I am afraid I can't argue with you."

"I don't want you to. I don't want to think of these things, much less talk of them—it is all so ugly."

Janson nodded. "Like the rest of the world, you are afraid."

She moved, drawing closer to him: closer, till he felt the warmth of her body, the scent of her furs.

"Don't talk," she whispered, her face close to his. Once again he bent down, and the lever rattled, the car hesitated a second, then sprang forward.

"I mean, don't talk aloud. I want to look at the sun and sky and the fields and trees; I want to feel the wind and to smell it; I want to hear all it says—and I want to hear what you say when you do not talk! And I want now and then to look at you, when you are making the car go very fast. You look determined and—so strong! You look just like a man!"

"Haven't I looked like a man before?"

Faustine shook her head. "I have not noticed it. Now Brooke Haigg, he always looks like a man; he always looks as if he had a steering-wheel in his hands, and a switch-board before him on which to manipulate mechanical humanity."

Janson was silent for a little while; the car shrieked with the wind. When the road curved, he felt Faustine pressing close; once her face almost touched his. It came to him suddenly—and the realisation brought him great joy—that this hour was his, as the hour had been Faustine's the previous evening. Passion lured then; now it was Life dancing on a thread.

"You're not afraid?" He knew the question was foolish.

"Afraid? Mon Dieu! I have never been afraid; life and death—who knows the secret of

either, or which is best? Do you think I care much whether it is you or Brooke Haigg who kills me? as long as I go out suddenly—and men, looking at me, say, 'What a pity! we wanted her.' I do not know that I much care if they say nothing; I have had my day."

Janson waited until another curve gave him his breath. "But you have never loved?"

Faustine laughed, and for an instant the wind hushed its voice. "Hundreds or thousands of years ago—not lately."

"And your dance?"

"Those are memories, my friend, of the dead."

"Who loved you?"

"Whom I loved."

"Isn't that the same thing?"

"Oh, mon Dieu, no! How little you understand! You have never loved."

"I have not." He had almost to shout; the wind did not care for his voice. "But I think I shall."

Faustine leaned back and hid her face in her furs. "I told you not to talk. You are disappointing me; I thought you were a man who would be entertaining without what you call the cackle. Am I so dull, or are you so stupid, that you must say the things you would not say if you were alone?"

Janson made no reply, and apparently Faustine was satisfied, for when he looked at her again

the laughter had returned to her eyes. She was happy; it was easy to see that. And it was she, herself, who was the first to interrupt the song of the motor and the whispering of the wind.

"England is beautiful," she admitted, "when one looks at it like this. It is a garden. You should plant a few more flowers in it and a few more children, and then, when it is spring-time, one would wish for nothing better."

"Shall I take you to Devonshire one day, one day in the early spring? You could make your bed of primroses or daffodils; or for a carpet, miles of purple heather—and moorland streams to bathe in; and if you want a throne, I would carve it out of granite on the top of a rugged peak, and you could look beyond the hills to the sea."

Faustine nodded. "Now I know where you come from; you look like moorland heather and granite boulders. Yes, I think I should like to be there with you, for an hour."

"One hour!" He laughed, and slackened speed, until the car crawled. "Give me that hour," he said quietly. "It is nothing to you. Give me that hour; I want it."

Faustine leaned back until the sun shone on her face: until, looking down, Janson saw the white throat rising pillar-like from the fur, the red lips upraised, cheeks burning with the wind and eyes partially veiled.

"The woman who gives an hour, gives her

life. I shall give it one day, perhaps, but I do not think to you. And one hour would not suffice me. It is as if I were asked for one dance, and then told never to dance again. Don't you understand what I have here?" She laid her hands on her breasts. "Here are my unborn children who have clamoured for life ever since I was sixteen. And I am as frightened of them as I was then—because I know now—I know!"

"What do you know?" he whispered. His voice was unsteady, and his hands shook as they gripped the steering-wheel.

Faustine did not alter her position; her head dropped a little further back, and her throat strained until the veins showed like pink bands beneath the skin.

"I showed you last night what I knew; perhaps you did not understand. But I think Brooke Haigg did, and probably he is feeling afraid of me to-day. . . . He knows that beneath my heart, here, are crowds of little devils waiting to be set free. Whether he will set them free or not, he does not know."

"Do you?"

Her teeth met in her lip. The lids quite covered her eyes. "Yes, I know."

The car stopped with a jerk. The road was empty; only the motor throbbed softly. The wind was silent, and the leaves scarcely stirred in the trees standing sentinel. Janson looked down

at Faustine: a long time he looked, his face resembling somewhat the granite he had described on the moorlands. Then he bent towards her; she opened her eyes.

"I love you!" he said.

She sat upright, and Janson touched the lever, and the car started again.

"I did not want you to say that."

To his surprise she took off one of her gloves and laid her hand on one of his on the steeringwheel. The car wobbled, but the road was broad.

"Not you, mon ami," she said very softly, in a voice he did not recognise. "Perhaps I love you too, but the children here, the devils "-she laid her other hand on her breast-"would not be satisfied. . . . If you had said I love you, as the others have done, I should have laughed; if you had said I love you, as you might have said it again yesterday, I should have been sorry. But to-day I understand. I am glad you love me; I want you to love me-so I shall let you love me all your life. . . . Of course I knew, when I saw you, what would happen; that is why I chose the Brooke Haigg to cure or kill me. To-day is yours, and I, as you say, am yours to-day. But for the rest, I can give you no more than I gave the world last night—you possess no more of me. And so you will always remember, and always desire, and always love."

"You vile philosopher!" He managed to laugh. "Now you shall have what you wanted —silence."

She placed her hand on his shoulder: it was almost a caress. "But we will talk to each other?"

"Yes! And when you are hungry you must tell me."

"Not for food"—she laughed: "just the wind and the sun. A country hotel with tradespeople eating roast beef and drinking hot coloured water?—la, la!—no, when the sun sets—and not until he goes to bed—take me back to London, and if we must feed, let us feed there with some show of decency. And then you shall take me home and talk to me until I fall asleep."

And he did.

And when he crept quietly down the staircase out into the foreign-English street, he walked home with shoulders squared and his head held high, for he was still full of sunshine—and Faustine the dancer. He had had his day—Sunday. The week was Brooke Haigg's.

That thought was torture, for Faustine would give Haigg, and Death perhaps, what she would not give him.

When he reached his rooms he filled his pipe, and, taking out an advance copy of his book on Mutilative Operations, he read again his annotations and additions. Brooke Haigg might fail

or succeed, Faustine live or die, but the fate of his book she had determined. It should live, and perhaps save life.

So Faustine the dancer was, in spite of herself, doing a woman's work in the world. Her gift of life she had transferred to Janson, the physician.

#### ΧI

Noyada was angry. It was half-past eleven, and Faustine had only just consented to appear. There was a great deal to be arranged, and he was beginning to feel nervous, almost to regret that he had persuaded Brooke Haigg to operate.

"Have you prepared—are you ready—what time do you go?" he asked excitedly.

Faustine shrugged her shoulders and leaned out of the window. "This evening, I believe—but I may alter my mind."

The little alien looked almost relieved as he strode up and down the room, picking up a photograph or a paper, moving a chair, or twirling his moustache. "Faustine, shut the window and listen to me!"

"No!"

He sat at the table and buried his face in his hands. "Faustine, one day I shall kill you."

He heard her laughter; it echoed down the street, and the children playing beneath the window looked up and waved their hands.

"You flatter yourself, mon ami. But why do you worry—what does it matter to you when I go? I tell you I do not know what I shall do—I am not awake yet; I have not yet recovered from all the British air that was blown into me and through me last Sunday." She turned from the window and, leaning against it, yawned. She was pale; there scarcely seemed any gold in her hair this morning; it looked quite black, pressing heavily upon her white face; her eyes were lifeless, and the only colour was upon her lips. In contrast to the black and white, they appeared very red.

Noyada rested his face between his hands and stared at her. Again she yawned.

"Do you ever wash and brush yourself?" she asked, looking at him curiously.

"Pouff!" He blew the question aside. "It will be time enough when I leave London. . . . Has Brooke Haigg told you this operation is dangerous?" She nodded. "And you are not afraid?"

She shook her head.

"I am!"

"Have you not saved enough money?"

Noyada leapt to his feet; he trembled with rage. "You still laugh at me. . . . Faustine, have I not proved I love you? Why have I followed you all round the world and been content just to do the work that no one else

could do for you, whilst you gave others smiles and kisses and good words? What have you given me?"

"More than I gave the others-money."

He nodded. "And I have lived on a dozen shillings a week; the rest I have saved. There are many hundreds of pounds waiting for you, Faustine, when you are tired—and I think you are beginning to grow tired. Oh, I can wait," as she made a gesture of dissent; "I have learnt patience as I learnt love—dieu! you have taught me both. If necessary, I will wait until you are old and all these lovers want you no more."

"I have no lovers," she said coldly.

"Yes, I know; you laugh at them, and that is why I laugh too, when, waiting outside the stage door, tumbling over me, they say—'Damn you, get out of the way!'"

He laughed and rubbed his hands. "It is very funny; it is the best joke in the world, and I have it all to myself. These men, they feed you, they dress you, they drive you here and there; you cry for the moon, and they float a company in the city, a hundred thousand shares at a pound each, to buy the moon for you, whilst I, your husband, watch and wait."

For the first time Faustine looked at him with interest. She shut the window, and sat down at the table. "What are you waiting for?"

"For you."

She threw back her head, drew her fingers across her eyes, and sighed. "My friend, listen to me; I thought we understood one another. As long as I have my dance I want nothing else, and I give nothing else to any man."

"One day you will grow tired—you will have danced enough."

"Then for my lover, la mort."

Noyada snapped his fingers. "You say that to fool me; I know better than that. Have I been with you all these years without knowing you? You are full of life, full of passion; if you say that, I know you deceive me."

Faustine smiled curiously. "You have had proof once: has the wound healed, then?"

Noyada smiled too and leaned across the table towards her. "No, it has not healed; every night and every morning I look, and there is still the mark of your knife. I will not let it heal; the scar is there to remind me. If you had not struck me so, I should never have loved you as I do. That wound will never be healed save by your lips, Faustine."

"Ah!"—she rose and swung across the room— "we waste time talking. I am going out; I am going to see Moir-Brown."

"Not yet!" He placed himself before the door. "I want to know what you are going to do if this operation is successful—if he cures you?"

"I do not know what I shall do. Why ask questions that cannot be answered? you are growing quite English. Am I a machine to be wound up and perform the same gyrations time after time until the wheels are worn out? Am I a thing of wood—a string to be played upon, producing any tune the fiddler requires? That is how men would have us live to-day, I know, and that is why the world is so dull and so dirty."

Of a sudden the colour came to her cheeks, the light to her eyes, and her hair shone, her bosom expanded. "My husband, I am sorry I can never love you—that is one thing I do know; and the other thing I know is that I am a woman, and I have no intention of being anything else to please the world, the priest, or the devil. If ever I meet a man whom I recognise as my natural mate, I may love him-just as long as I want him and he wants me, and no longer. No priest has ever taught me what is right and wrong; but I am a woman, and I know. That I married you is nothing: the law of marriage is simply a laboursaving law; it saves men and women and children the trouble of thinking and loving for themselves; it allows them all to shirk their responsibilities; it glorifies lust and degrades love."

"Since when did you become philosopher?" Noyada sneered.

"Since I met you. No, my husband, we have each been useful to the other; that is the only

benefit marriage confers. But for me you would now be outside—there, where those children are playing—selling hot chestnuts, or grinding an Englishman's idea of music on a barrel-organ. I have earned you money; you have saved me the trouble of looking after it. I have paid and will pay you for the trouble, but not with love. I know it is the fashion to sell love—they do it over here every day; the rich sell it in the churches, the poor sell it in the streets; it is an open market, and you, my friend, can go and buy. But, thank the good God, I can remember I was a barbarian; I remember when men stole, or gave—they did not buy, and women did not sell."

Noyada was still trembling. "You have learnt to use big words, and you have grown marvellously moral suddenly," he sneered. "Is it because you fear Brooke Haigg may not succeed?"

"If I feared," Faustine laughed, "I should not put myself in his hands."

"Then I fear for you," Noyada cried. "I do not want you to go—the operation can be put off. It is more dangerous than I thought. . . . It is life or death, Faustine."

"Exactly; if it were anything else I should not risk it. I daresay you would not care if I were maimed for life; you might even be glad, for then I should be in your hands and you could take me back to Italy and let me lie in the sun

and look at the sky all the day, and die slowly. Ugh!"—she shuddered—"no, mon ami, I will risk the butchering of my body, but not the butchering of my love."

She opened the door and he let her pass. "Now I must go out; I feel half-stifled after that conversation. I shall go and see Moir-Brown and play with his children—and wish they were mine."

Noyada hesitated a moment. He slipped his hand into his breast, then, shrugging his shoulders, turned away. "Go—I can wait!"

Faustine dressed quickly; she put on the simplest dress she could find and a comparatively small hat. She walked to Moir-Brown's house, and reached there just as the family had finished lunch and the doctor himself was about to start on his afternoon rounds. He smiled at Faustine, and took both her hands in his.

"Delighted to see you! but you don't want me professionally, of course?"

Faustine nodded. "I do. I want just to know my chances on Saturday of pulling through."

Moir-Brown looked serious, stroked his chin thoughtfully—and prevaricated. He referred her to Haigg.

"I have had Haigg's opinion; I want yours."

"Mine coincides with his."

Faustine laughed. "All doctors are liars. Stop being a doctor for a moment, and be a friend. I

am not frightened; I only want to know—I am a born gambler; perhaps that is why."

Moir-Brown looked at Faustine-looked at her more closely than he had ever done before, and his conscience pricked him. He still possessed a conscience—quite a healthy one: that was why he was a general practitioner with a small income and a large family. Looking at her, he felt just as he remembered feeling when, as a student, he had looked at a small dog which they had strapped to the operating table, and were going to experiment upon. Looking at her, he could not help sympathising a little with Haigg. Whatever the operation was, she would make a splendid subject: she was strong and healthy—she would not die easily. She might recover and linger for years; she might recover, and be as healthy, probably, as she had been before the operation.

He walked up and down the room, and Faustine watched him. "You are coating your lies as you do your pills—in silver; n'est ce pas?"

Suddenly he drew his chair forward, sat down close to her, took her gloved hands in his, and, laying them together, held them so.

"My dear, it doesn't matter what the pill is, so long as it is silver-coated. I have come to the conclusion that the only thing I sell my patients, which cures them, is faith. That, like the medicine, must be disguised and given another name. If I said 'Good people, faith will cure you,' they

would publicly hang me or privately burn me. And they would have my full sympathy. No, I must dilute my faith with a little nux vomica or camphorated water. When a medicine makes them feel sick, the physical disturbance gives them a little spiritual stimulus; and so faith is born, and they are cured. . . . You will recover from your operation, my dear."

"Thanks—aren't you going to dilute that with something?"

"You don't want drugs; you're a real woman, who doesn't care a damn for the messy ways of men. There, I have sworn, but you don't mind, do you?"

"Mind what?"

Moir-Brown sighed and rose to his feet. "Well, I'm afraid I must go my round of tongues and temperatures; I wish you hadn't told me I was a liar, though, I try so hard to forget it. Now, I feel inclined to tell all my patients the truth. I really think if it were not for my children, I should; but you see they would starve."

"Doctor Brown!"

The physician started, and ran his fingers through his hair. "Good gracious, how your voice changes! Why, what's the matter?"

"Do you think that I—shall ever have any children?"

"My dear-" He stroked his chin again, and looked away through the window, out into

the street, beyond the street towards the skies. "I understand you've been married some years——"

"I have not."

"Ah!" He beckoned Faustine to his side, laid his hands on her shoulders, and, standing with his back to the window so that the light fell full on her face, looked into her eyes. "You must ask Brooke Haigg," he said slowly; "but I'm afraid——"

"That will do. I don't think I want children.
... It is only a dream sometimes.... If the world were quite different, and if each child as it was born were a child of love—oh, how good it would be to be a woman then!"

She tried to move away, but he held her tightly until, to his surprise, he saw there were tears in her eyes.

Tears in the eyes of Faustine the dancer! Tears in the eyes of the woman who nightly lured with the lure of the flesh! Quickly he released her and walked away.

"I'm sorry I must leave you."

In a moment her mood changed; she laughed. "Oh, I have said all I wanted to say; only curiosity prompted me. I was motoring last Sunday. I think I swallowed too much English air; I have felt miserable ever since—positively hateful. So I want badly to be amused, and there's no one to amuse me. London is just as

London looks—grey. All day long everybody is grovelling in the City."

"Not everybody." Brown smiled, as he threw a few things into a small black bag.

"Well, the few people who don't go to the City simply go to the restaurants and eat; that's why you are just off, to visit those who have eaten."

The doctor grinned. "You know what the Romans used to do when they had eaten too much?"

Faustine laughed. "I remember."

A flash of humour lit Moir-Brown's face. "I really think, just for fun, I shall give them that prescription this afternoon. Lord! how angry they would be, and what a lot they would eat to-morrow!"

"Can't you give me a prescription?" Faustine sighed. "I mean, I am out of work now, and I must do something."

"There are concerts in the afternoon," the doctor suggested feebly.

"I looked in once," Faustine cried, making a face, "and saw three hundred hard people sitting together on three hundred hard chairs staring at a wooden platform where a hard-faced man played on a hard-toned piano with the mechanical precision of an automaton. Music—yes, there was music there, right enough! Mon Dieu! but they had stripped her of every rag, and the poor

thing stood shivering on the platform, naked and ashamed, whilst six hundred virtuous eyes glared at her."

"I never have time to go to the theatres; but I believe there are some good plays. You might do a round——"

"I sampled them at matinées, but all I saw was one actor holding in his hands the strings to which were attached a dozen marionettes, and all I heard was the rattle of gold as they counted the receipts in the box office."

Moir-Brown opened the front door. "The children are upstairs in the nursery—"

Faustine smiled. "What a long time you have been taking a hint! I may go and play with them? You don't think I shall demoralise them?"

"I do it myself every day"—the doctor laughed —"antiseptic surgery. Good-bye!"

Faustine found her own way upstairs; the noise led her to the right room. She opened the door without knocking, and silence came suddenly; then a small voice shrieked: "It's the dancing woman!"

The dancing woman! She threw off her hat and pulled off her gloves. "Now then, let's have a good romp!"

Tactless youth, with eyes that see and ears that hear—more than age ever guesses,—insisted on Faustine dancing.

"But I don't dance," she said. "I am not sure that I know how."

"That isn't true," Marjorie said, a small, chubby, round-faced edition of the physician. "I heard father say you were one of the wonderfullest things he had ever seen."

Faustine acknowledged that might be true, but still maintained that she never danced.

"Then what do you do?" asked another.

Faustine sat on the floor; she slipped there suddenly, and the children found themselves wondering how she did it. Laughing, they fastened themselves around her like shells on the seashore.

"I tell fairy stories," she whispered. "I pretend I am a wolf, and I rush out into the forest and chase with the wind through the trees and devour everyone I see." She drifted into an old German legend, and when she had finished they sat around her, wide-eyed.

But Marjorie was not satisfied; she insisted on a dance.

Faustine smiled as she rose, and kicked her high-heeled shoes off. "This is a dance," she whispered, in a deep voice that thrilled the children, "that no one has ever seen; it is the dance of the wind on the top of the pine-trees, right on the top where they touch the sky, you know. You must listen as well as watch, and you will hear the music that the cones make when the wind's feet touch them."

It was true no one had seen the dance Faustine danced to the children. They lay on the floor and watched her feet and ankles and her hands when, with her skirts, she made the music of the wind's feet. They looked at her face, her eyes: perhaps it was something they saw there that made the youngest ask Faustine, when she had finished, whether she danced to her children—and where she kept them.

"They are all very naughty," she whispered, "so I always keep them locked up—here." And she caught the youngest and held her in her arms, tightly.

"Then you are a wicked mother!" Marjorie laughed. "But you can dance!"

Faustine nodded. "When I have tried before, the wolf has always come after me; but I expect you have frightened him away."

#### XII

FAUSTINE'S arrival at the Brooke Haigg nursing home was sensational.

She arrived alone, with a large amount of luggage. She looked at her room, shrugged her shoulders, and demanded to see Brooke Haigg. When she was told he could not be seen until the following day, she again shrugged shoulders, and went out.

When she returned, parcels pursued her, and instantly there commenced a battle-royal with the matron.

Flowers were not forbidden, but madame could not turn her room into a conservatory: curtains and drapery, and other furniture than that provided, were forbidden. Moreover, Madame Noyada's luggage was bulky: and of what use Paris gowns and Paris hats? And the underapparel she brought-well, it was ridiculous, in the matron's eyes.

Faustine listened, occasionally shrugging her shoulders and waving her long white hands

deprecatingly. But eventually she lost her temper; fortunately, she lost it in French argot. The matron retired, vowing vengeance. Faustine unpacked, placed flowers in every available corner of the room, lured an unfortunate probationer into helping her change the position of all the furniture, including the bed: and then, when she was exhausted, changed her dress for a wonderful lace robe, and, throwing herself into the arm-chair which she had introduced into the room, lit a cigarette and wondered desperately how she would pass the night.

She looked at the clock: seven! She shuddered; it was useless to dream of coaxing sleep before midnight. She picked up a little diary and turned the pages: three whole days before the operation—and she had promised she would rest for six! She chuckled to herself; it was nice to disobey Brooke Haigg. Yet three whole days!—nothing to do, nowhere to go; only food and drink—she could imagine what both would be like—antiseptic cookery!—illustrated papers, a few books, perhaps a visit from Brooke Haigg morning and evening. But she knew he would not talk to her; he might pinch her and prod her, and treat her as a case, not as a woman.

She could amuse herself by irritating the matron; but that would be poor sport, for the matron evidently belonged to the neuter gender, like the majority of the English women she had met.

There were the flowers. . . . She rose, inhaled their perfume and touched their petals, thrust a few into her dress.

Already she was bored, and an hour had scarcely passed. She picked up an apple from the dish, and, biting it, commenced to walk up and down, humming the music of her dance under her breath. . . A quarter to eight! it was time she was changing: the hour she usually prepared for the theatre.

.... The people were in their seats—she could see and hear them; the orchestra was thrumming. The blood quickened in her veins; she stretched her limbs and drew a deep breath, and said wicked things in many languages.

Absolute rest and quiet: no excitement. Bah! how dare Brooke Haigg give advice such as that? He ought to have understood her temperament. Was he, after all, a fool like the rest? But, she reminded herself, she had promised, and on the success of the operation her future depended.

For the first time she felt fear stab her. Physically, she felt the edge of his sharp knife, and mentally, too, the dread of the unknown. Doubts assailed her, and innumerable questions suddenly entered the room and winged their way noiselessly to her heart. She began to wish she had listened to Janson. His methods, perhaps, were uncertain and messy—but safer. Even if he did not heal he did not destroy.

Brooke Haigg would come with a knife and cut.

She shivered, dropped into a chair, and covered her face with her hands. She was really frightened, and for the first time in her life! . . . Presently she looked up, knowing she was alone and dreading the loneliness, hoping to see someone, if only the nurse. The empty room mocked her, and the silence. She listened to it attentively: it was the first time she had heard the silence for many years. No noise from the street; not even the laughter of children or the echo of hurrying feet on the pavements; not even the noise of the familiar barrel-organ. Silence filled the big house too, and yet she knew there were many people in the nursing home—those pale English girls with white caps and white aprons. She had passed many doors and many corridors, and in every other room, on a narrow bed as ugly as the bed that stood in the corner of her room, lay one of Brooke Haigg's victims, fighting death silently.

Fear dug his knife deeper, and Faustine writhed. The silence was horrible; she could not bear it, she told herself. What were they doing, all those nurses she had seen, and all the patients she had not seen? It was as if she were in the house of death.

Perhaps there was one among them who was dead. . . . She jumped to her feet, opened the door, and listened. The reign of silence was

indisputable. It was difficult, now, to believe she was in London: her imagination refused to picture Piccadilly Circus or Leicester Square. The twanging of fiddles in the orchestra seemed very far away.

Had Brooke Haigg deceived her and brought her to this place for an experiment? No, Janson would have warned her. . . . Then she remembered he had warned her. . . . She grew desperate, and, crossing to the fireplace, rang the bell violently.

A nurse entered silently, followed by a servant, who placed her dinner on a small table.

"For goodness sake sit down and talk to me," she said to the nurse. "What's happened to everyone, and why is everything so silent?"

The woman smiled. "You are not accustomed to the silence?"

"Ma foi, no!" Just the sound of her own voice made her feel better. It was good to eat; and, hoping to woo courage, she asked for wine.

"Wine is prohibited—you are on a diet."

Faustine shrugged her shoulders; she would obey now, because she was frightened. "Talk to me," she cried, a little impatiently—"tell me things. Why are you here? Did you become a nurse because you liked it, or because you were lonely or poor? Surely it does not amuse you to live with the—the dead and the dying?"

The nurse smiled, and, leaning forward, looked

steadily at Faustine. "It's my profession. I suppose because you have only known health you are impatient at ill-health; but it's as interesting to fight death as it is to fight life."

"You say that as if you thought I destroyed."

"No, you amuse people—you only know laughter; I know the other side."

Faustine shivered. "Does no one ever laugh here? It is as silent as the grave. Shall I ever laugh again?"

The nurse nodded. "You'll laugh to-morrow, when you awake, at your thoughts to-night. Sir Brooke Haigg will make you laugh when he comes his round; he has always an amusing story to tell."

"Sir Brooke Haigg? Why do you say that? He has not——"

"Yes; haven't you heard?" The nurse smiled. "It was in the newspaper this morning among the list of honours; they have made him a baronet. I'm sure he deserved the honour; we are all so proud."

Faustine laid down her knife and fork, and sank back in her chair. "He is a baronet," she repeated under her breath. "That is a great honour, is it not? He would not have been honoured so had he not been very clever?"

"He is the cleverest surgeon of the day."

Faustine smiled again. "That is right, I feel better now. But don't go away; tell me more

about Sir Brooke Haigg. Are there many people here now—patients?"

The nurse nodded. "We are very full just now—there's only one vacant bed,—and they are all interesting cases."

"That means dangerous, n'est ce pas? Ugh, how horrible it is!"

The nurse shook her head. "You wouldn't think so if it were your profession; it's interesting. Of course one is sorry for those who suffer."

"Do they ever die, his patients?" Faustine interrupted. "Does he ever fail to cure when he operates?"

The nurse rose. "Of course some cases are incurable; patients know that themselves. But you need not have any fear; you're in safe hands."

Faustine listened to the nurse's footsteps down the corridor. Silence came again very quickly, and thoughts returned to torment. The night was still young, and the minutes passed slowly. She lit another cigarette. The nurse had sniffed suspiciously when she entered the room, but Faustine had not noticed. She commenced to walk up and down the room puffing clouds of smoke between her lips. She picked up a paper, looked at the illustrations without seeing them, then threw it away.

Suddenly she started—the silence had been broken by a cry. It was like a cry she had once heard when she had been dancing in a circus at

Barcelona—of an animal in agony. She found herself unwillingly creeping to the door, opening it wide, and listening. The sound had come from a room down the corridor on the right; the door was ajar, and a light filtered dismally into the passage.

Again the cry: horrible and a little grotesque now. It was answered by the voice of a nurse, a voice raised authoritatively, cold and sharp.

Then silence again.

Faustine flung her cigarette away, and crept down the corridor. Her limbs were trembling; a peculiar numbness seized the middle of her body, accompanied by a feeling of sickness. She reached the door and, prompted by an unknown power, unwillingly opened it and entered.

A room such as hers had been, before she filled it with flowers, their perfume, and the perfume of herself, her clothes, and toys. She hesitated on the threshold; there was undoubtedly a perfume in this room, strong and pungent, which bit her nostrils and her throat, threatening for a moment to suffocate her. The scent of antiseptics and disinfectants, the drowsy odour of strange drugs.

The nurse was standing by the foot of the bed; she looked up as Faustine entered. "You have made a mistake."

Faustine replied mechanically, and was surprised at the sound of her own voice.

"You can't stop here-"

Faustine found her eyes resting on something that lay curled beneath the counterpane—something that had once been woman, and was now flesh and bone and a little ruined red hair.

"Don't go!" The voice was a startling contrast to the producer of it.

The nurse was by Faustine's side. "You must not stay; it is against the rules—besides—"

There was a chair by the bedside; Faustine promptly sat on it.

"I make my own rules." She turned to that which lay curled beneath the clothes. "Yes, let me stay and talk to you. I, in my room a little way up the corridor, was beginning to feel mad. I hate the silence of a house, and people who move about silently."

The woman on the bed nodded, and pretended to smile. "Sometimes I like to listen to it—the silence, I mean,—but now and then I grow afraid of it."

Her eyes searched Faustine's, but the latter, when she saw them, closed her own.

It was the first time she had looked into the eyes of anyone fighting with death—and, losing the battle, yet clinging desperately to the battle-field. The eyes she saw had once been blue; now they were almost colourless, blurred with agony; her face was ageless; it might have been the face of a young girl or a middle-aged woman.

"Tell me, have you been here long?" she whispered. "You look quite well. You're not going to stay, I hope?"

The nurse tried to interrupt again, but Faustine ignored her. "Yes, I am going to stay for three whole days. And then"—she shrugged her shoulders—"I am to be formally introduced to Monsieur Death. I hope he will take a dislike to me, and I shall go out again. But you—you are suffering; can't I help you?"

The nurse from the foot of the bed looked at the patient warningly. "You must not talk. If you persist in talking and this lady will not go away, I must call the matron."

"Oh, go for the matron!" Faustine said between her teeth; "but tell her she had better not come here, or I shall hurt her." The nurse left the room. "When Brooke Haigg comes to-morrow I will make him dismiss some of these people," Faustine said between her teeth. "Oh—la, la!—if one stuck a knife in them, I wonder what one would find?—not flesh and blood, I'm sure."

Again the woman tried to smile, but her eyes were grateful. "You're not English, are you? It's lovely to hear someone speak like that. You're very strong, aren't you? you feel full of life and electricity."

Faustine laughed, and, acting on a sudden impulse, took one of the fleshless hands lying on the counterpane in her own.

"Yes," the woman whispered, "it's almost like touching the live wire of a battery. Oh, I feel strong now! I almost feel I could get up and run about. Oh, if I only could! Just now I was praying, with my eyes closed, that I might be able to once more get up and go to the window and look out. I know from this window one can see the sky—when it's not foggy,—and the stars might be shining. And then, the wind in one's face!... I can smell all the horrible things that are all over the room and that they cover me with. There's no air... I prayed awfully hard just now, and then, whilst I was praying, the pain came on, and I cursed God."

Her voice rattled in her throat; it was laughter. "I ought not to pray, because it's no good, and as often as not my prayers are interrupted with curses. Don't let go of my hand, will you?"

Faustine said something under her breath in Italian. "You don't understand Italian?" The woman shook her head.

Faustine repeated what she had said—aloud—with variations and additions.

- "What's your religion?" the woman whispered.
- "I haven't any."
- "But you will before you die, won't you?"
- "I hope not."
- "Oh, but you must!" the woman cried. "I thought I believed; now I'm dying I know it must have been imagination. Before I came here

I went to a Hostel for the dying; there, Priests and Sisters of Mercy came, and told me I must repent. I wanted to, but I wasn't sure, so I listened to them all, Catholics, Protestants, and—I forget the rest, there were so many; but they all prayed, and they all warned me. They said unless I repented I should go to hell. . . . It's all true, I know it's all true. . . . It is all true, isn't it?"

Faustine's teeth were clenched. "What's true?"

"What they told me. I don't know what to believe. You see, they could not guarantee forgiveness unless I promised to believe, and each told me different things, and they frightened me. I grew so frightened, when, every day, someone fresh came and warned me I was dying. It's true, isn't it? If I don't make up my mind and repent, I shall not be saved?"

Faustine threw back her head. "Of course it is not true, not a word of it!" She gripped the bone so lightly clad with flesh, in her warm hand.

The woman turned the blurred blue of her eyes on Faustine's brilliant eyes. "Say that again! Tell me what you believe. Oh, do tell me that there is a God—or even if there is not, I'll try not to mind—only, I want to know one way or the other. And supposing after death there is something else. . . . I don't know why I should worry you like this—forgive me! I've

been such a long time dying, and they all frighten me so. I don't know what to think or what to do. You see, I must lie here day after day, and I can seldom sleep. Of course the nurses are all kind and mean well; only they get tired of hearing me ask the same questions, so I have to keep my fears to myself."

Faustine gripped the woman's hand still tighter; and the force with which she held it hurt her, the living, rather than the dying.

"The things all the priests have told you are all lies," she said slowly. "They are paid to tell them to you. Maybe they believe them themselves; but that makes no difference. . . . You said just now you wanted to see the stars—if you could see them you would know these things they told you were lies!"

"Yes, I thought so; that's why I wanted to see them."

"As if you or I mattered," Faustine continued. "We don't die as we understand dying. To-day you are what we call Woman; to-morrow you may be the smoke curling up from the chimney, or the grass breaking through the earth, or the flower bending before the breeze, or the drop of water that helps make the ocean. And the priest will be warming his feet at the heat you give, or drinking the dew you hold on your blade of grass, or floating on the bosom of the waters which you swell."

She shivered suddenly, and bent over the bed: "La, la, what am I saying!"

"All I wanted to hear. Go on!"

"That is all."

"It is enough. I don't deserve it, because I'm such a coward. I tell you I'm afraid to die—ask Brooke Haigg! They have done all they could for me. You see these pellets by my side? I've only to swallow three or four of them, and I should not wake again. There they lie at my hand, but I haven't the courage! I may take one when the pain comes on, and when the nurse's head is turned I have only to take three—but I haven't the courage."

She tried to raise her head. "Listen, they are coming back: you must go now."

"Oh, no, I won't go. You need not be afraid; they won't frighten me away."

"I don't mind if they do now—if you'll promise to come and see me in the morning. And quick—just pull up the blind, open the window wide, and turn out the light: I think from here I might see the stars shine. . . ."

It was done in an instant, before the door opened and the matron entered. The cold wind blew into the room, and for once the mists did not obscure the sky.

So the dying woman saw that Faustine knew far more about God than all the priests.

But Faustine, when she had said good night to

her over whose soul religious maniacs had waged so violent and cruel a warfare, was filled with terror. The perfume of the flowers was destroyed; she looked at the bed, but dared not enter it. She slipped on a cloak and hat, and, waiting her opportunity, hurried down the corridors, through the hall, out on to the steps. And then, as she hesitated, uncertain which way to turn, she saw Janson coming towards her.

"Good gracious, I expected to find you in bed!" He laughed. "Or rather, I was not sure of finding you at all, but I thought I would inquire if you were safe and snug."

"Safe and snug!" She hurled the words at him. "I'm in hell."

Without a word he took her arm and, leading her down the steps, walked with her up and down the street—up and down a dozen times until the night air had cooled her.

Then he talked to her. But though an hour passed she refused to be persuaded to re-enter Brooke Haigg's nursing home unless he came too.

"You haven't half the pluck of the English girl you pretend to despise," he said.

But she merely shrugged her shoulders. So he entered with her and took her to her room. And she made him smoke a cigarette whilst she commenced her toilet.

He was weak for once: probably because he loved. Faustine had her will of him. What he

felt, she did not think until he had gone; she only considered herself. A woman no longer, but a child, frightened, refusing to be left alone, demanding a grown-up to say good-night and frighten away the ghosts.

"What a bed, mon Dieu!—it is as narrow as a coffin, and as hard."

When he left her she was calm and sleepy; Janson was terribly wide awake. He paced the streets now, alone, the blood pumping through his veins, his muscles like steel.

And Faustine, as she fell asleep, sighed gratefully, convinced that Englishmen were strangely kind and strangely cold, wondering a little how much she cared for Janson, and why she loved Brooke Haigg . . . . also, if he killed her, whether she would spring from earth's womb again as grass, water—or fire?

#### XIII

THE Butcher arrived.

A thrill of expectation always ran through the building, communicating itself from one patient to another, directly Haigg crossed the threshold. His visits were fairly regular, yet they never failed to excite. Each woman knew directly he arrived; his presence in the home was felt before it was seen, even before it was heard.

Tired eyes opened wide; lips, that had once been red, parted in a smile of expectation. Those women who were very young and whose strength offered a promise of life, would whisper to the nurse to bring them powder-puff, lip salve, and mirror, that they might look their best when the surgeon came to examine his handiwork.

Each small room in the building held its tragedy, and each tragedy considered itself the alpha and the omega.

Every medicine man cultivates what is loosely called a bedside manner, and every surgeon,

whether in funereal frock-coat or cheery white apron, takes care to cultivate an atmosphere of optimistic intelligence.

But Haigg was an exception: he was always bluff; outwardly, at anyrate, always brutal. Hence the secret of his success with women. It was the brute they loved, the strength and the cunning he possessed. Though they never saw the steel between his fingers, they saw it in his eyes or heard it in his voice; they had even sometimes felt it through the medium of his hands.

He aroused in their breasts primeval instincts; because they were weak they clung to his strength. Every woman has the instincts of a vampire in her breast, and every woman who met Brooke Haigg felt these instincts stirred to life.

He was merciless, both in his behaviour toward them and his treatment of them. Sometimes rare flashes of humour were allowed them; and rarer still, there were moments when he was kind and almost tender.

It was the contrast, of course; the rare tenderness of the brute was far more gratifying to patients than the love and sympathy of husband or brother, lover, or their own women-folk. Many women there would rather have felt Brooke Haigg strike them, than their husbands' lips against their own.

Those who were cured most easily were least

grateful: they were jealous when they were told that a case in a room, perhaps adjoining theirs, was to undergo a second or third operation.

On the morning following Faustine's admittance to the home, she was the last patient the surgeon visited. The matron had reported, and Haigg was angry.

"You must obey, or you cannot remain here," he said sharply. "You are not free to play your tricks, or air your whims and fancies, here."

Faustine sat up in bed, shook the mane of black hair with its dancing sunbeams from her face, and forced Haigg to meet her gaze. She had so far obeyed that morning as not to rise until he had seen her.

"Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard his spots?" she quoted under her breath. "I am Faustine the dancer——"

"You are number twenty-two," he interrupted curtly. "Look above your head: you'll see hanging against the wall all that you are now."

She nodded. "Thanks, I read that chart this morning, directly the nurse brought it in, and I flung it across the room. . . . I won't be treated as a child or a fool."

Haigg dismissed the nurse, and, leaning over the rails at the foot of the bed, looked at Faustine and smiled. "Why do you object, since you are both?" Haigg found Faustine a relief after the other women: no man had yet robbed her of her

virility; moreover, she refused to acknowledge his omnipotence. At present she did not steal from him; rather he from her.

"Do you expect me to lie here two whole days doing nothing, to be ordered about by that dreadful old woman? And this room you have given me, sacre, is a dog kennel without the straw."

"Evidently you don't recognise that you have to undergo a very serious operation in a few days. Unless you prepare for that operation, I shall not perform it, and unless you obey the rules of this home implicitly you must go at once."

"I realised everything last night," she replied savagely. "Mon Dieu!—l'enfer could not be worse. Because I have got to lie on my back, and be stuck like a pig in two days, why should I not be happy? All the more reason that I should sing whilst I can, dance whilst I can, and talk whilst I can."

"Well, go back to the theatre, then; you can chatter and play the fool there to your heart's content." Haigg looked at his watch. "You must make up your mind at once."

The blood suddenly dyed her face, neck, and arms; her fingers, trembling, sought to tear asunder the cob-webby garments at her breast; then she hid her face in the pillows—and waited.

But Haigg shut his watch and turned on his heel.

Genuine passion seized her now; she sat upright. "Beast!.... No, don't go!"—as he reached the door. "I will do whatever you tell me; only, I do hate you!"

He nodded. "That doesn't matter if you obey me."

- "Don't go away, I want to ask you lots of questions."
  - "I make it a rule never to answer questions."
- "Oh, you and your rules!" She smiled; she was happy again now. "Don't you think I have improved this horrible little room? Do you see that nice cosy chair, and the pretty curtains?"
  - "The curtains will come down."
- "Ugh! You haven't told me how I look this morning; you haven't felt my pulse; you have done nothing."
  - "Yes, I have—I've whipped you."
- "Whip me again—Sir Brooke Haigg! You see, I know you are grand seigneur now. I don't suppose you care——"

Haigg turned away, and, walking to the window, looked down into the street. "Yes, I've won my spurs," he said under his breath—"and in much the same way as they won them in olden times."

She watched him curiously; her expression changed. "You are not satisfied?"

"Who is? . . . . Faustine, I am sick."

Faustine nodded. "I knew that when first I saw you. You want a medicine man, mon ami.

When you let me out from your ugly home I'll take you to mine; oh, la, la, I'll pay you out!"

Haigg laughed, and shook off the mood that had seized him unawares. "You overgrown child! I wonder——"

"What do you wonder? Something about me; I see that in your face. You wonder whether I am going to die or not. Tell me—I am serious now—it's right you should tell me—there is danger, isn't there?"

"Yes." The answer was delivered like a blow.

"That is not sufficient; what I want, is to be killed or cured."

"I can promise nothing; I explained everything to your husband."

She made a gesture with her hands. "My husband! Mon Dieu, you English talk of husbands and wives as if they were hands and feet, eyes and ears. It is not my husband you are going to chloroform and stick on a table—it is me, me, me! Do you think I am afraid of death?—bah! Come here, closer! Now, when you saw me dance the other night for the last time, what did you feel?"

Haigg hesitated. "Perhaps I shall tell you in a month; not now."

"You will refuse nothing I ask, then?"

He groaned. "Madame Noyada, the etiquette of my profession——"

"Allows you to lie to some people, kill others, and to let humanity suffer and rot, rather than offend a brother butcher—I know! I want you to promise me something now. . . . If, when you operate, you find you cannot cure, will you promise to kill me?"

Haigg tried to force a laugh; to his surprise it failed to come at his bidding. He drew back from the bed and buttoned his coat. "You must not talk nonsense, Madame Noyada. Au revoir, until to-morrow."

"Stop!"

"Not another moment. Good-bye." He hesitated as he reached the door. "Are you going to obey?"

Faustine was about to refuse, but fortunately she looked at Haigg first. She bowed her head. "Yes... perhaps, if you have time, you will send a message to my husband telling him I would like to see him before to-morrow night. And there is something else—I am sorry to keep you——"

"All right—only be quick; I have already stayed too long."

Faustine shrugged her shoulders. "I could make you stay longer if I chose," she said under her breath. Then—"Who will give me what you call the anæsthetic?"

"You wouldn't know his name."

"Well, I don't want him; I want Janson. I

see you are going to throw etiquette in my face. Don't, or, mon Dieu, I'll jump out of bed and strangle you with it!... Just grant this one little thing—I will ask nothing more; when you come to-morrow I won't open my lips even."

"It's impossible."

"Very well!" She made a pretence of pushing the bedclothes aside. "Go! I am going to get up and dress and go away, and you won't ever see me again. . . . Oh, Brooke Haigg, just grant me this! You will do it, I know, it is such a little thing. You see, when I go to sleep I may not wake up again, and I would like Janson to be the man who sends me that long sleep."

The reply Haigg was about to make died on his lips. He came back and stood in the centre of the room with folded arms, and looked at Faustine; and she looked at him, wearing an expression she had never used before. Angel, devil, child, primeval woman—she was all four; now she expressed a fifth type for which a name is not to be found.

"And why Janson?"

Faustine sighed inaudibly. She had made Haigg jealous; she was satisfied. "I have two friends," she said slowly. "Life is a little thing, and you know I do not make a fuss about it. Nevertheless, for the few hours it is to be no longer in my hands I would like to place it in the hands of those two friends. That is natural, eh?"

"Very well."

Faustine laughed when the door closed, and, jumping out of bed, danced across the room, changed the water in the vases, played with the flowers, and looked at herself in the mirror.

"You are going to get up?" the nurse said as she entered.

"May I?" Faustine asked.

The nurse nodded, and hid a smile, for it was so with all Brooke Haigg's patients; there was not one he failed to control. Throughout the day Faustine's behaviour was exemplary, even to the matron; and the latter took care to have her revenge.

Faustine was generous, and refused to be goaded into insubordination. She even made no sign when, instead of Janson himself, a letter and an armful of roses arrived.

Janson was very wise, she told herself a little regretfully, for he allowed his flowers to act as interpreter. The letter contained but three words: enough to make Faustine wish he had written half a dozen pages.

"Courage, mon amie!"

The letter she slipped beneath her dress; the flowers lay on her lap until they faded. It was late in the afternoon before Noyada arrived in answer to the message Haigg sent him; the servant had just brought tea, very weak, and three thin slices of bread-and-butter. Faustine made a wry face;

Noyada dismissed her invitation to share her tea contemptuously, but he expressed his approval of the Brooke Haigg home and his wife's room; nothing, in his opinion, could have been better.

Faustine let him talk, agreeing with all he said.

When he had finished she told him why she had sent for him. "The operation will take place on Friday about two o'clock; you will come in the evening and inquire for me."

"I shall come in the morning, and wait until it is all over."

Faustine shrugged her shoulders. "As you please. They won't let you watch, you know, and you will be very bored waiting."

Noyada smiled: bored was not quite the right word, but he let it pass. "Whatever the result," Faustine continued, "you must promise to come to me directly they will allow you—or sooner. Haigg may be able to tell you at once whether it is satisfactory or not, or you may have to wait some time; but if it is not successful—"

"Yes—?" The little man was looking at her eagerly, twisting his short, tobacco-stained fingers together.

"Well, Sigismund, if it is unsuccessful I want you to return the embrace I gave you on our wedding-night."

The alien's pale face turned white; he ceased twisting his grubby fingers together. Faustine bent towards him until he felt her breath on his

face; the perfume that surrounded her was in his nostrils, and went to his head like wine.

"You mean-" he stammered.

"I mean, it must be life or death—for me. If you don't promise I will go now, at once, and dance until the warning comes. Then I will kill myself."

"But there is no doubt that he will succeed," Noyada whispered. "It is dangerous—yes; but not more so than crossing a London street, or driving in a London cab—sacré, I was nearly killed coming here! It is so simple. And remember, Faustine, unless the Brooke Haigg operates you cannot live for long; so he said!"

"Well, you promise?"

He took a handkerchief that had once been white, from his pocket, and mopped his brow. "It is not easy in cold blood. In a moment of passion I have often longed to kill you, Faustine. I think sometimes that one day I shall."

She lay back in her chair and looked at him with half-closed eyes. "And you think you love me! I believe Haigg would do it himself if I asked him... were it not for etiquette. Perhaps Monsieur Janson——"

Noyada sprang to his feet. "No, I promise." His hand flew to his hip pocket, and he drew out a knife, and, bending down, pressed his lips to it. "It is enough, Faustine; it shall be as you say, life or death for you. I will come to you when it

is all over, and if you say strike, I will do so. Because I love you—remember that, always because I love you; because you, when I would win your love, struck me here, and the wound has never healed."

Faustine nodded and closed her eyes. "Thanks, Sigismund; you are my friend after all. I think I have three friends now." She held out her hand. "Au revoir!"

He took it, covered it with kisses—her hand, her arm, and the lace on her gown. "I shall see you again?"

"Not until Friday night. And remember, if I ask you to strike, strike deep."

He nodded. "You can trust me—for death will make you mine, and I shall cheat the others. Au revoir, Faustine, until Friday."

#### XIV

Janson's book was published on the Thursday before Faustine's operation. Some of the newspapers that had received advance copies, reviewed it in Friday's editions. The medical journals did not criticise it; they demanded its suppression, or the suppression of its author. It was, they said, obviously written for the general public, and contained things of which the public should be left in ignorance.

Health is not for the public, else how should doctors live?

Haigg had received the book, but he had not opened it; however, he read some of the reviews and smiled. He was a little sorry for the temper they exhibited; but, after all, he had warned his friend, and no man can do more.

His friend! He considered as he walked brusquely up Bruton Street how this foolish book would affect their friendship. In future, he could not afford to be associated with Janson, for Janson would henceforth be a marked man—

doomed. He had dared strip Truth and tell the blind to open their eyes; he had dared sow seeds of wisdom among the ignorant; he had dared call upon the healers of men to be more busy with their healing; he had even demanded that the sick should no longer be given scraps of paper, scrawled across with illegible Latin names. He had called the licensed man a quack, and many surgeons licensed murderers.

In brief, he had made a fool of himself, as many other men, probing for truth and serving humanity, have done.

The wise man and the fool met in the wise man's private room of his nursing home in Bruton Street half an hour before the operation.

"You have seen the verdict, I suppose?" Janson smiled.

"Yes," Haigg replied; "do you realise what it means to you?"

Janson raised his eyebrows. "Oh, they'll 'down' me, I suppose. I don't care. I'd rather they fought fair; but still, any fight is good. The Augean stable wants cleaning out, my friend."

Haigg was preparing for the operation. "Do you consider you are sticking to your principles in—in helping me to-day?"

Janson started. "I didn't look at it in that light. I am not helping you: I'm helping Madame Noyada."

"Helping to kill her—according to your book."

"If you like," Janson said a little wearily. "Or, if you like, helping her through. Shall I see if everything is ready?"

Haigg nodded. After a while he followed Janson to the operating theatre, at the other end of the house, and shut off from it by heavy folding doors.

Haigg was a man who spent no time in preliminaries, and allowed his victims no law. When he was ready there could be no delay.

Janson gave Faustine the anæsthetic in her own room. She looked at him a little whimsically; her eyes, when he tried to read them, expressed curiosity rather than fear—the intense curiosity of a child who is about to start on an unknown journey.

"I am ready," she said directly he entered the room. "I just want you to send me to sleep quickly, and talk to me. I don't care what you say; talk rubbish if you like, but talk all the time."

"I'll tell you a story," he said, bending over her, "about a child—you have often reminded me of her—who lived on the edge of a dark forest and was fascinated by it. She was always longing to run away and discover what its depths held, and one day, prompted by curiosity, she entered the forest. She expected to find it terrible; she expected to see wild beasts and strange, horrible creatures; she expected it to be cold and dark

and lonely. But instead, the further she penetrated the more beautiful the forest became. From every tree birds fluttered; they sang to her more sweetly than the birds of the fields. Strange lights flitted like butterflies between the black trunks of the trees; the ground was covered with flowers with sweet scents. . . . "

Faustine was smiling. A little sigh shook her body . . . . her eyes were closed.

".... The flowers were so beautiful, and she was feeling so tired, she knelt down and picked them.... And then there rose up from the ground a Prince, like the Prince you read of in fairy stories, who took her in his arms and carried her away...."

They carried her into the theatre, so Janson's story was never finished. Though he ceased talking, yet Faustine heard him for hour after hour, and she laughed because the story amused her so. . . .

And then, after a while, his voice drifted away as she, Faustine, drifted out to Sea. No longer the forest, but everywhere, water—sea, a subtle, delicate pink, the cool waves wrapping her limbs like lovers' kisses; overhead the sky, making a mighty roof as blue as the blue of Southern skies.

She had drifted, but whither the waves carried her she neither knew nor cared; she was without fear. She saw nothing but foam, pink and white, with little waves; overhead the blue, and sometimes drifting by her side, strands of her own dark hair. She was conscious, too, of her white body which the water supported gently; but her body seemed less a part of her than it had ever been before. She felt as if she were separated from it, and she found herself watching it curiously—sometimes enviously. . . .

It was drifting so quickly through the sea, and though she was separated from it she could not leave, but had to follow.

On and on they drifted, she and her body, the kisses of the waves increasing, and now and then she felt the wind breathing on her face. It carried not the salt scent of the sea, but a strange odour stolen from flowers that blossomed in another world. . . .

Presently the sea and the wind sang to her, so softly at first she could scarcely hear; but gradually, as she drifted faster and faster, the song grew louder. . . .

The sea grew colder, and its colour changed from pink to red. The waves no longer kissed, but bit with sharp teeth, and where they bit red marks were left. Then, watching, she saw her body begin to sink; very, very slowly, but the red waters gradually closed over it.

And swaying to and fro it drifted down, down into the depths. . . .

She could not leave it—she could not let it go. . . . She hovered above the red of the sea, safe if she chose, for the wind called to her to spread out her wings and mount towards the everlasting blue. But her body, the body that had served her so well, was sinking into unknown depths, and she saw strange beasts, dwellers in the red sea, swimming around it . . . . creatures like snakes curling about the limbs, winding in and out of the hair . . . loathsome, oily creatures. . . . And closing her eyes, she plunged beneath the cold waters in pursuit of her body.

She heard the roar of the waves grown suddenly angry; she was carried hither and thither—danced in a whirlpool, twisted round and round.... But she clung desperately to herself.... and together they sank.... wondering if the sea were fathomless, for it seemed they would never reach the bottom.

Down, down, down!—turning, twisting, swaying to and fro; and the waters became icy and froze her limbs. . . . She could no longer breathe, she could no longer see. . . . But she and her body were one again, and she began to struggle—fighting to free herself.

It was too late, she could not escape. . . . Deeper and deeper—darker and darker—colder and colder—sinking—for ever.

Then, struggling, her seeking hands touched something, something warm like flesh and blood—a human hand lost in the depths of this cold, red sea. She gripped it tightly, held it, forcing her nails into the flesh for fear it left her. . . .

She was safe—safe in the forest again! But the flowers were racing wildly to and fro over her body as she lay panting in the grass, and the trees were swaying to and fro, bending right down to look at her and laugh; the ground heaved and swayed as if with an earthquake. . . .

And she heard Janson's voice a long, long way off finishing the story . . . such a stupid, monotonous voice, and such a stupid story! Yet she had to listen to it. It was foolish of him not to tell the flowers to go back to their places: their little feet, as they raced across her body, numbed her heart; the branches of the trees as they bent down struck her flesh, and hurt horribly; and the wind was so strong that she could not take her breath. . . . She was dying of suffocation.

Her only chance of salvation lay in holding tightly to Janson's hand. She hated him—but he alone could take her safely out of the forest into which he had lured her. So she set her teeth, and with all her strength forced her nails into the flesh of his hands, and waited.

At twelve o'clock!

Never since the creation of the world had the beginning of a day dragged so slowly. Each hour seemed to breed hours, which the clocks of the city refused to record. If only the hands of those same clocks would never point to two, or would just miss the figure out, and escape to the next numeral. . . . But Noyada knew no matter how the morning tarried: two of the clock would surely come, and with it, hell.

It came.

Noyada found himself, he knew not how, in Bruton Street; the house faced him, looking like most other London houses, cold and cheerless, with a dirty, unwashed face. He stood in the centre of the street and looked up; he listened; neither eyes nor ears received any message.

He could not stay; he did not want to go. He cursed the hour he had awaited so anxiously—already five minutes old.

What were they doing to her at that moment?

The question startled him into running away. He found himself in Oxford Street, and jumped on to the first omnibus running westward. Perhaps he thought so to escape, but he found there was no escape; the omnibus tarried as Time had done; the horses, the driver, and the conductor were in league together. He was jolted and shaken on the wooden seat of the roof; the horses slipped on the greasy pavement; the

conductor seized every opportunity to ring the bell, and the driver sat lazily hunched up on his seat, caring not at all.

No one cared. But it seemed strange to Noyada, crouching, wrapped in his shiny frock-coat, and soft felt hat pulled well over his ears, that not one of the millions rushing to and fro about the streets and pavements of the city knew that Faustine the dancer was at that moment in the arms of Death.

The rain began to fall—a yellowish drizzle,—but he refused to vacate his seat; he pulled his old coat closer, and wrapped the oilskin about his frayed trousers.

He cursed the crowd running like rabbits in and out of the shops and offices; he cursed them in French and Italian, and sent them to perdition in Spanish—they, who a few weeks ago had gazed open-mouthed at the dancer and cheered her. She had gone, someone else had taken her place, and what did they care whether she lived or died? They were busy scratching for gold to buy their amusements; what matter to them if those who had amused them rotted?

And the omnibus swayed slowly through the streets, and the horses slithered and slipped, and the driver grunted and shook the rain-drops from his face; and ever and again the conductor pulled his bell with irritating monotony.

Oh, these English, calm and imperturbable, 148

hard-hearted, cold-blooded, with water in their veins instead of blood—water always blotting the colour from their sky and trickling down the stone or wooden streets!—slow, obstinate, brutal, and mirthless!—how he, Noyada, hated and despised them! True enough, he had come with Faustine to steal some of the wealth they had accumulated, the good gold they wasted on food, hospitals, and churches.

Three o'clock!

Perhaps it was all over; yet Brooke Haigg had warned him it would be useless to return until four or five. An hour and a half . . . . something might have happened; perhaps she was suffering . . . perhaps that clean-cut, rebellious face was drawn with pain, and the beautiful limbs, which had never known his caresses, even then writhing in agony. And no one knew, and no one cared. All might be over already—she was perhaps dead!

He jumped to his feet and shook the rain-drops from his hat, and in broken English anathematised the omnibus-driver and his fat British horses.

He descended the ladder, and, jumping to the ground, tramped the streets. Occasionally he found himself staring into the shop windows; once or twice he narrowly escaped being knocked down, and instead of cursing was cursed. And then, at a quarter to four, he found himself in Bruton Street again.

He rang the bell, and was shown into a small waiting-room where specimens of English humour in prose and pencil jeered at him from the round table covered with a red cloth. On another table rested an old copy of Byron's poems left by a grateful patient who had lost the major part of her anatomy, but retained her life. Beside it, a Bible, sent by one of the soul-saving societies for the benefit of those who placed their souls in the butcher's hands. Noyada glanced at Humour, at Love, and at Literature.

When he had walked in the rain he had been shivering with cold; now the heat was so great that he sweated. Perspiration trickled down his face; in vain he mopped it with his untidy handkerchief. He opened the door a little, and listened. Nothing could be heard; the silence was like the silence of death. Once he opened the Bible and tried to read, but was only conscious of beautiful rhythm. The idea of prayer came to him, but went as quickly as it came.

For it was too late to do anything. He was a stranger in a strange country; their gods were not his gods—their gods had no respect for women. To kill Silence and cheat Time he talked aloud; he even laughed at the things he said. Anything rather than silence.

Five o'clock—half-past—six o'clock!

He rang a bell, and demanded to know what was happening. No one could tell him. He

tried to force his way upstairs, but the manservant blocked the way; he was a big man and Noyada a little, and though the latter had his knife, and felt for it in his pocket, he reminded himself there might be other work for it to do, and if Brooke Haigg had already done that work there would still be opportunity left for him to use it.

He tumbled into the shining arm-chair, and alternately laughed and cried. What strength he possessed was gone, and it would not matter very much what message was brought him now.

When the messenger did arrive he rose, and followed him automatically; he asked no questions. He was taken to a room adjoining Faustine's.

Haigg stood with his back to the window; one unshaded electric globe burnt with a dull light overhead.

"You have not operated?"

The question came automatically and was asked without emotion. Noyada could not see Haigg's features clearly, but he saw that outwardly the surgeon was unchanged. He was dressed, as usual, with scrupulous care, his hair neatly brushed, his eyes cold, and his mouth a thin line.

"Yes, I have operated, and successfully, I hope."

Noyada laughed. Haigg raised his hand a few inches, and the alien checked himself, and placed his own hands over his mouth.

Haigg continued. "But it was a long and

severe operation. I sent for you because I fear there is some danger of collapse. Nevertheless, I think she will pull through—but you would like to go to her? Before you go, drink this."

Noyada seized the tumbler and emptied it. In trying to replace it on the table, it slipped through his fingers and fell to the floor, skattering into pieces. His sight became blurred, and he stretched out his arms blindly. Haigg guided him to Faustine's room. Someone was sitting on the chair by the side of the bed.

Noyada dared not look at the bed; instead, he looked at the man who sat beside it—and presently saw Janson.

The latter rose. "Take my place."

Noyada tumbled into the chair. He was alone with Faustine and Janson—but as yet he had only seen the physician.

"Why do you wait? Leave me alone."

"Perhaps I had better wait," Janson replied quietly, "in case——"

"No, go!" He slipped his left hand into his pocket. "You have killed her between you, I know; but this last moment is mine. Go!"

Janson's reply, though clear, was inaudible to Noyada. He waited until he heard the door close. He waited until silence was his—silence and the white thing between the sheets.

Then he rose and leaned over it.

"Well! Why have you left her?"

Janson closed the door, and, pulling forward a chair, sat down wearily, and ran his fingers through his hair.

"He wished to be alone with her."

"He wished! She is still-"

Janson nodded. "She is still fighting."

Haigg folded his arms, and, turning, drew the curtains across the window. The daylight had gone. "Yes, she will fight, she is strong. . . . How long do you think I took?—three hours! I almost expected to finish in two. . . ."

Janson said nothing; he sat before the empty fireplace staring into the grate. There were outward and visible signs on his face of the struggle in which he had participated; deep lines ran from his nostrils to his mouth and dark rings surrounded his eyes; hollows cast shadows on his cheeks.

"Janson, she must live," Haigg said after a while, speaking as if he were giving an order to

his servants. "You know what I discovered, don't you?"

"I don't know, and I'm damned if I care!"

If Haigg heard the reply he paid no attention to it. "Even if she dies, when I exhibit, every surgeon throughout Europe, throughout the world, will say——" He checked himself, and glanced at Janson. "But if she lives, I shall have accomplished the greatest feat . . . . they'll call it a miracle."

Janson was listening. "It would be a miracle—but not performed by you."

Haigg squared his shoulders; his eyes dilated, and a tinge of red mixed with their steel-like colour. "I wonder what Beard, Blumenthal, and other of your masters will say? Would you have liked to try and destroy with your ferments what I have destroyed? Would all your drugs and injections, your vaccine and sera, or your trypsin, have accomplished in three years what my knife has in three hours? . . . Janson, if she recovers you'll buy the whole edition of your book and burn it, won't you?"

Janson raised his head. "Hark, what's that?"
"You had better go back; you shouldn't have left her."

Janson rose, took a deep breath, and walked towards the door. Before he reached it, it burst open, and Noyada staggered into the room.

"Well?" Haigg faced him, standing with

folded arms like a rock, reading with his steellike eyes Noyada's face before he could speak.

The alien was tugging savagely at the crumpled, unclean collar at his throat; his eyes were bloodshot, his features distorted.

"It is not well," he stammered, the words fighting in his throat. . . . "Le combat est fini . . . . elle est morte!"

Janson stopped Haigg. "I'll go."

He shut the door behind him quickly, but when he reached the door of Faustine's room, though it stood wide open, he did not enter at once.

#### XVI

NOYADA reeled towards Janson's chair, and, clutching at the back of it, peered into the surgeon's face.

"My congratulations," he whispered. "My con——"

"Sit down," Haigg said quietly; "wait until Janson returns. You have probably made a mistake."

Noyada laughed, but the sound was not unlike the growling of an animal. "I have made no mistake, Sir Brooke Haigg. Do you forget that I am her husband? And I am here to remind you, and to remind you that you have killed what I love."

He commenced to speak in a whisper, but as he proceeded, his voice rose: it came harshly; his face, which had been an unhealthy pallor, grew red; the sweat still glistened on it.

Haigg watched him, unmoved. "You have probably made a mistake. Wait until Dr Janson returns. Only those who have made Death's acquaintance can recognise him."

Noyada loosened his hold on the back of the chair, swayed unsteadily to and fro, then slipped into it and sat down. He bowed his head, holding his hands over his face as if to hide Haigg from sight.

The man who had killed his wife was reading his thoughts, and he did not yet wish him to know the resolve which was forming in his heart.

"I need no introduction to Death...he entered the room so quietly I did not notice him...he crept into the bed and lay beside my wife—took the kisses I have waited for... and so she became his. It was done in an instant."

Noyada spoke almost in a whisper, muttering to himself. "When I put my arms around her she was cold, her body limp; her eyes closed. . . . I do not think she opened them once."

Passion seized him suddenly, and he raised his voice. "You are in league with Death, Brooke Haigg. . . . Perhaps you were jealous of me, eh? . . . . you lusted not for beauty, but for blood . . . . and whilst she lay powerless in your grasp, and you stabbed and stabbed again, I was wandering up and down your cursed wooden roads, jostled by your cursed English crowds, with the rain in my face and the mud covering me. . . . Damn you—you have killed her! Mon Dieu, you have killed her!"

He raised his head and looked at the surgeon with flaming eyes—eyes almost the colour of his cheeks; but the surgeon was moved not at all. The single electric globe above his head seemed to burn more feebly, the dull glow emphasising the gloom and Haigg's powerful figure.

He stood, sphinx-like, in the same place where he had stood when Noyada entered the room, as cold as a figure hewn from marble, and with something of the beauty of a statue; even in the fashionable frock-coat, black tie, and collar, he looked not unlike a Roman gladiator who has paused in a bout with an old enemy to take breath, and is standing ready to resume the fight. He suggested strength of mind as well as of body; his frame might have been a store-house of energy. His nostrils dilated like the nostrils of a horse.

Noyada looked at him with hatred, not untinged with fear. Haigg looked at the little alien without pity, only with contempt.

"You had better control yourself, or I must turn you out," he said sharply.

Noyada was about to reply, when he heard the sound of Janson's voice outside, then footsteps hurrying along the corridor. He listened until there was quiet again; then he looked at the surgeon, nodded, and laughed stupidly.

He had made no mistake — Faustine was dead! "You have murdered her!" he growled; "what are you going to do?"

"I have warned you," Haigg replied, "unless you can control yourself you must go."

Noyada rose to his feet; he, too, folded his arms, and now fear left him, ousted by hate grown insane. "So that is all you have to say! You have stolen Faustine. She is not the first—no, but you will find she matters more than the others. She belongs to the world, and I chose to lend her, waiting for my time. The world does not care, I know, what happens to its toys when they are broken: it turns to fresh ones and breaks them. But I care, for one day she would have been mine! You-you despise women-because you are an Englishman; you despise Love because you are a surgeon and cannot dissect him. The only thing you don't despise is Death, because it amuses you to gamble with him, eh? It is not legal to gamble with money in England, is it? No, you are too respectable and virtuous! but with women's lives it is different! Gold is your only god, and you leave flesh and blood rotting in the streets; you buy it to game with."

"Silence!"

"No, I have been silent a long time; I let you have your say. I have been silent for years; I have let all men have their say. They asked love of Faustine, and she gave them laughter; but you, you asked more—you asked life. She lent you hers, as a stake against Death; you have played and lost. Death is satisfied—but I am

not. . . Sir Brooke Haigg, I am waiting to be paid."

Watching him, Haigg saw what had happened: Noyada's mind was unhinged. The surgeon moved towards the table, poured some brandy into a tumbler, and handed it to Noyada. "Drink that, and sit down."

"Thanks!" He swallowed the brandy, but remained standing.

"You see, Janson has not returned yet," Haigg continued, "so I was right when I said you had made a mistake. I will go myself and, I hope, bring you back good news."

Noyada sprang to the door as Haigg moved towards it, and locked it. "Stop! You think you will escape without paying! Ah! you think I am not in earnest—you despise me as all the others have done; you judge by externals, mon ami—my shabby coat, my dirty boots, my hands which are not always clean, my face which is not always shaven!" He laughed. "It is the English way—I know it now; they regard what the man wears, not what the man is. I tell you I loved Faustine—loved her more than myself, and that is why I wore greasy rags and she wore white linen; that is why I smelt of oil and garlic, and she of roses and lilies."

Noyada's rage gave place to a queer dignity. He bowed to Haigg, and Haigg did not move, but stood watching and waiting. He was dealing

with a madman, and he took no risks—with his own life. He had been born to stab, not to be stabbed; to mutilate others, perhaps, but not to risk mutilation himself.

"I must not judge you severely; I forget that you know not love, so you do not know the storm that rages here in my heart. Neither do you know, or will you ever know, what storms swept the heart of the woman you have killed, what dreams she dreamed when she danced, what lovers embraced her when the music echoed in her ears."

"Perhaps I know as well as you, or better!"

Noyada started; it was Brooke Haigg who had spoken, yet it was not the voice of the surgeon. His mood changed again; he lashed himself into a fury. He bent low, one hand thrust into the bosom of his coat, the other lying on his hip.

"You—you know nothing! Un boucher you, that's all! But you have had your day; you have slain your last victim, and now your turn has come."

He struck so swiftly that Haigg, though watching, was too late to avoid the blow. He saw the knife flash—he jumped aside and seized Noyada's arm as it descended . . . . but the knife grazed his face, and entered his breast just below his arm on the right side. Noyada had leapt forward and upwards as he struck, and the blow and

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his weight bore the surgeon to the ground. They fell together; but Haigg kept his grip on Noyada's wrist, twisting it as he fell.

The little alien freed himself, and, rolling over, was on his feet again in a moment. The blow had gone home, he knew, and he looked round for another weapon to complete his work.

There was a knock at the door, and Noyada hesitated. It gave Haigg time to rise to his feet; he moved forward, then dropped into a chair. But he held Noyada's knife in his left hand, and kept his eyes on Noyada's face.

The alien watched, uncertain how badly the surgeon was wounded. Their positions were reversed now; without his knife, he was lost. Fear sobered him. He watched Haigg anxiously; and the man he had struck sat quietly in the chair, apparently unmoved, seemingly unhurt. He kept his right hand pressed to his breast, and Noyada saw a little blood oozing between his fingers. His eyes were bright, the line of his lips was unbroken.

He looked at Noyada and smiled, and Noyada crept back, like a frightened beast who in a moment of madness has attacked his master, and waits for the lash.

"Unlock the door!"

Noyada tried to speak, but his lips seemed glued together—his mouth was parched; he crept further away from the calm figure in the chair.

"Unlock the door!" Haigg said again, still "You needn't be afraid, Monsieur Noyada. . . . I understand."

He would have refused had he been capable. He slunk to the door and turned the key, and again he heard Haigg's voice bidding whoever knocked to enter.

A nurse stepped into the room. "Dr Janson would be glad if you would come to room twenty-two."

"Madame Noyada? She has recovered consciousness?"

The nurse replied in the affirmative.

"I will come," Haigg said, and the door closed. Noyada leaned against the wall, with difficulty keeping his feet. Haigg smiled. "You hear, your wife is better? If Dr Janson has no objection, and you are in a fit state, you had better go to her."

Again Noyada tried to speak, but words eluded him.

"Well, why do you hesitate?"

"Faustine-lives," he choked, his fingers at his throat as if to help a passage for his thoughts. "And you—mon Dieu! what has happened! . . . what have I done?"

"Made a fool of yourself, my friend. But we'll discuss that another day. Go, now, and tell Dr Janson to come to me."

Noyada buried his face in his hands for a moment, then he turned and swung the door

open, looking over his shoulder at Haigg as if fearing he were playing a trick with him.

"Faustine is not dead!" His voice rattled in his throat.

He slid through the door, and Haigg was alone; he remained sitting in the chair motionless, one hand pressed over the wound, the other holding Noyada's knife. When Janson entered he beckoned him to his side.

"You haven't left Noyada alone with his wife?—that's all right." He laughed under his breath. "The fool lost his head, and stabbed me with this knife."

Janson frowned, and, bending down, unbuttoned Haigg's waistcoat, tore open his shirt, and examined the wound.

"Not deep, but it's bleeding rather freely. . . . Can you walk to number ninety-two? that room is empty, I think."

Haigg nodded. "Oh yes, I'm all right. You had better have a look at it, though, when we get there—in case he's touched the lung." Janson helped him to his feet. "I can't think how he did it; he went for the heart, of course; I caught his arm—I was prepared... but he got the knife home."

"Don't talk, old man; come along. When I've made you all right, I'll see to the little brute."

Haigg shook his head. "No, not a word.

No one knows anything—neither do you. I wish it... This room will do; get me into bed. I feel pretty shaky—I don't know why."

"Because you have had such a light afternoon's work, I suppose," Janson growled. . . . "Look here, Haigg, this is a nasty wound—you can't keep the affair dark; the nurses will find out, and they're women, you know."

Haigg laid his head on the pillows and closed his eyes. "Don't talk, get to work! No one must know, I tell you; I won't have any nurse fooling round me. I shall be all right to-morrow. If I'm not, call it—influenza. Shulter will do my work. . . ." He laughed. "If necessary, I'll bribe you—you shall experiment here with trypsin."

Nature's kindly anæsthetic robbed the surgeon of consciousness before Janson washed, probed, and dressed the wound. When he left the room, he locked the door and put the key in his pocket.

# XVII

BROOKE HAIGG was laughing at a very excellent joke, which other men might have considered a tragedy.

Janson did not laugh: he looked grave, and his face was careworn—the face of a man who has not slept for many hours; the wound from Noyada's knife had set up blood-poisoning.

"Perhaps you will have to use the knife, Janson," Haigg said grimly—"undertake the first operation originally performed in the Garden of Eden—remove one of my ribs."

But Janson refused to see the humour of the situation. "You'll have to stop where you are; you can make this excuse now. Shulter's here, and everything's going on all right."

"Look here, if you mention blood-poisoning outside this room I'll—— Blood-poisoning!...

Janson, I've not been able to sleep and I've read your infernal book, so I know you're mad; but you're not an absolute fool, are you? Brooke Haigg—blood-poisoning! You'd

better ring up the news agencies and amuse London with a delightful scandal concerning the newly-created baronet—lovely dancer—dangerous operation—jealous husband. They'd pay you well, and you could work in a bit about yourself and your cancer cure without mutilative operation."

Janson was silent. Haigg asked him to fill a pipe and give it to him.

"Don't smoke!"

"Do as you're told."

Janson fetched pipe and pouch, filled the former, gave it to Haigg, and struck a match. "Very well; I'll send Shulter to you this afternoon. I suppose he'll look after Madame Noyada, though little Bentley seems very interested in her case. I suppose the boy has fallen in love with her. I'll clear out. I've already heard from the High Priest. A letter from the Registrar of the R.C.: the English Medical Monthly is more furious than ever with me."

Janson shrugged his shoulders. "But I don't think we ought to discuss this thing together; and though if in the future we are not able to see anything of one another, my feeling and friendship for you will remain unchanged—and," he added with a laugh, "my opinion."

Haigg nodded, and picked up a newspaper that was lying by his side. "You saw *The Scalpel*, I suppose, to-day? It gives you two lines—'Crush-

ing exposure of the pseudo-scientific fallacy of cancer serum treatment."

"Say nothing," Haigg interrupted sharply; "I was only chaffing. What a boy you are, Janson! Of course it couldn't have been prevented—infernal rusty knife which Noyada probably used to chop garlic and cut his corns. I'm all right; I'm glad of an excuse to lie on my back—and think. I should like to review your book myself. I shall read it again, anyway, and think about it."

Janson turned quickly. "Still chaffing?"

"No, serious. And look here, I'm sorry I can't let you go. Shulter can do my work if he will, but I'd like you to keep an eye on Faustine, and you must look after me; I won't have anyone else near me."

Janson looked worried; he strode quickly up and down the room. "Haigg, I've got my own work——"

"You're a dreamer. My dear chap, you can easily give me a couple of hours a day. You can send that little Irish nurse to look after me—what's her name—Molly? I can teach her to hold her tongue."

Janson smiled. "Whenever I see her she chatters."

Haigg nodded. "I've noticed it. Women who say most know least. She told someone when she came here she thought nursing so interesting and such fun. She had better learn." He sighed. "Lord, it is good to smoke!"

"I'm a fool to let you."

"God made fools to save wise men. How is Faustine this morning?"

"No change; a little stronger, perhaps—every indication the wound will heal successfully. Curiously enough, she won't speak a word."

"Then she'll recover."

Janson smiled. "I should have thought a woman who couldn't speak would die. . . . All right, Haigg, I'll do as you wish; I'll see the matron, and give your instructions about the nurse. Hadn't you better go to your own place? You can't stop here if you've influenza, you know. Besides, Nurse Molly——"

"Oh, I can sneeze. . . . Tell them I've sprained my ankle. Tell them nothing."

Janson opened the door. "That's what I have told them."

Haigg nodded. "Why a man with your intelligence should write a book, I don't know. . . . Give—give Faustine my love."

Janson hesitated on the threshold, then reentered the room and closed the door. "I don't

want to worry you, Haigg, but what about her husband?"

"Well, what about him?"

The physician looked at the surgeon and shook his head. "You are an enigma. The little brute tried to kill you, and you're not out of the wood yet, you know. You have given instructions that he may see his wife for a couple of minutes or so twice a day. You let him come and go as if nothing had happened; he behaves as if nothing had happened, too. But somewhere beneath his coat he's got another knife ready, I know that. He isn't safe, Haigg; you are risking other lives than your own. . . . Sometimes I think you're risking Faustine's."

"Oh no, I've discovered he loves her."

Janson nodded, and his expression changed. "Well, don't most of us kill the thing we love? In England we do it with a marriage licence; fools like Noyada do it with a knife."

"Good luck to them, then."

"I should have said that, Haigg, not you."

Haigg grinned: "I know, but you and our alien friend are teaching me. I think this little puncture on my fifth rib is the best thing that could have happened." He closed his eyes, and slowly puffed a cloud of smoke towards the ceiling. "It's a strange experience to feel the knife. Look at that arm. It was an arm; now it's a mouldy, bloated-looking thing. Perhaps it

will have to come off; then good-bye to my work. I should never carve again. The last mutilation would be the mutilation of myself."

Janson sat down by the bedside. "Don't worry; we'll save your arm all right—only don't smoke."

"You can take all four limbs, but you'll leave me my pipe," Haigg replied sharply. . . . "Tell me about Faustine, Janson."

"What about her?"

"The day before yesterday—that was the day, wasn't it? I haven't slept, and it seems so long ago. It was a fine piece of work, wasn't it?"

Janson closed his eyes also for a second. "She is a fine piece of work!"

"I don't think I saw her," Haigg said dreamily. "Or only for an instant, as one sees lightning flash across the sky. . . . It was wonderful—not the woman, but the operation. . . . By Jove, Janson, what an answer to your book!—if she lives."

"She will," Janson said under his breath. "Once she opened her eyes and looked at me, and she said, though her lips didn't move, 'I'm going to live; tell Brooke Haigg I'm going to live.'"

The surgeon smiled. "A threat."

"Yes, but she'll keep it, unless Noyada interferes."

"Noyada won't touch her. He might kill me, but he wouldn't kill her if she asked him to; he

hasn't the grit. No; Faustine will live in spite of my work, in spite of her husband. She'll live, Janson, because she loves me."

Janson sat upright in his chair, caught his breath, held it in silence for some seconds.

"Are you surprised?" Haigg continued. "When I say love, I don't mean the mental aberration which, I daresay, a good many of the women here have experienced—oh no, I mean the real thing."

Janson bent down till his elbows rested on his knees, his face between his hands. "What is the real thing?"

"Life . . . contact between two wires fully charged with electricity; singly each wire is harmless, apparently without life. Strip them, unite them, and they fuse. There is a flame that goes up, a brilliant illumination—then the light goes out and it's all over . . . an interesting operation; try it when you go home; only, wear rubber gloves!"

Janson rose quietly, holding his body erect, and walked round the foot of the bed to the door. "You had better keep quiet; try and get a little sleep now; I'll come in again to-night."

The surgeon nodded. "You've left me plenty of tobacco, haven't you? Before I sleep I must dream."

Janson hurried along the corridor, downstairs, and out into the street. He walked home, striding

along quickly, his shoulders bowed, his head on his breast.

The great surgeon had almost converted him to surgery. What drug was there—what medicine that would cure him of his disease?

Only the knife, only mutilation. He laughed. Love was a cancerous growth destroying the mind. The healthy escaped it: it was contagious, too, peculiar to certain districts and certain houses. Sometimes it mysteriously left those it attacked. But always the sufferer was ashamed of his disease; he kept aloof from other men. He was as a leper.

Love! The disease had been nearly stamped out in England, though it sometimes attacked the young. To the mature and the wise it came in strange, recurrent growths, living on itself, destroying itself by degrees: in this form, like all diseases, loathsome, carefully hidden from sight behind curtained windows and barred doors.

Janson locked his door, and read his letters. He made up his mind that, though perhaps he was a sick man, he would still fight—not the power of love, but the fires of hate and ignorance.

#### XVIII

As Janson had foretold, in due course of time the council, president, and censor of his college accepted his resignation, which they forced him, of course, to give. The publication of his book, appealing directly to the public, constituted a distinct breach of professional etiquette.

Janson did not say anything to Brooke Haigg, and the surgeon did not mention the subject: of course he knew, everyone would know in time—but no one would care.

Fortunately perhaps for Haigg, Janson was not turned out from the fold as a black sheep until after the surgeon's wound had completely healed, and he had recovered from his blood-poisoning without losing his arm.

Faustine's convalescence was tedious. For many days she coquetted with Death, whilst Death wooed her with all his strength and cunning. She had made up her mind to recover, but, being a woman, she listened to the master of all men and dallied with him.

And Janson watched by her side. The best part of his days he gave to her; the hours when his strength was great, his brain clear, and his faith strong. But the other hours, the remaining hours of the night, for his work. Sleep he cheated: if he had not done so, sleep would probably have cheated him.

Though she said little, Faustine was glad to have him by her side. He exerted a soothing influence, at the same time giving her of his strength.

Haigg had used his strength and cunning to mutilate: Janson used his to mend.

The parable the surgeon had spoken of the wires charged with life which, until they met and fused, seemed dead and lifeless, Janson treasured. His body was, after all, a store-house of energy, his muscles and nerves just wires. No hope for him of stripping bare his soul and uniting with another to flame into eternity: so, holding Faustine's hand, he poured his vitality into her body. Unconsciously she played vampire and he fed her.

Daily her strength returned; the light to her eyes, the colour to her cheeks, the red touched her lips again, and the sunlight sparkled in her hair; her flesh grew firm, and her bosom warm and deep.

"You look very old to-day, my friend," she said one morning, as he released her hand, and

she sat upright and buried her face in the flowers he had brought her. "I can see many white hairs, and your face is growing lined. You are not so nice to look at as you were when I first met you."

"That was such a long time ago," he smiled. She nodded. "I think I have been in this beastly bed for years. I can shut my eyes and tell you every single thing in the room, its exact position, its shape, and its colour and its size, and probably its weight too. I can tell you how many pieces of paper were required to paper the walls, and how many coats of paint on the door. In six days I am going to leave it. . . . Quickly, hold me—hold me tightly "—she cried like a child-"or something will snap, the thought is so exciting! To go out into the air, ah, mon Dieu! the clean fresh air; even the joy of getting a great big London smut on my nose, and feeling the dirty London smoke in my throat—I shall love it, oh, how I shall love it! I will climb on the top of a motor 'bus, and I'll bribe the chauffeur to drive like the devil down Piccadilly, whilst I dance on one of the seats."

She sighed, and lay back exhausted. "Let me go, you don't hold me nicely. . . . If you knew how this place bores me—how everything and everyone in it bores me; and you, my friend, you bore me most of all. But don't go. I could not do without you, that is the worst of

it; it's making me hate you. I want to do without you and those beastly bandages, and the beastly smell—all the horrible things you put upon me. . . . Oh, la, la, if I am ever well again, I think I will kill the Brooke Haigg."

Suddenly she burst into tears. Janson let her cry, holding her hand firmly. Like a greedy child she sucked his strength . . . then dried her eyes and, looking at him, laughed, showing her teeth between lips growing red again.

"You are patient. If you were a proper man you would beat me. But if you let me go away from this awful place very quickly, I will be good to you. Shall I tell you what I will do? You shall both come with me, you and the Brooke Haigg, and I'll take you quickly away out of this gloom to a village in the South, nestling under the Alps. There we will play like children, and the air will be soft and warm and the sun shall burn us. Think of it, always blue sky, the hills fading away into space; and below us groves of oranges and limes, and roses everywhere. And the evenings, when it is dark and we are tired, my people will sing to us, thrumming on mandolines or guitars. . . . Janson, you will send me away quickly, won't you?"

"Very soon."

"You have said that for months. Now let go my hand, I feel better. Give me the mirror again, I want to look at myself."

She made a grimace. "That's better, n'est ce pas? I am not quite such a hag. . . . Why don't you look at me; am I so hideous?"

Janson leaned towards her and also looked into the mirror. "My answer is there," he said under his breath. "Don't you know how you look, Faustine?"

Her nightdress chiefly consisted of old lace and a bow of ribbon: she had coiled her hair loosely on her head, and to amuse herself placed earrings in her ears, and two gold slave-bracelets on her arms.

"Brooke Haigg will be here presently," she laughed; "he grumbles because I like to wear this—and this; because I will brush my hair. . . . But all the same he looks at me, and sometimes he changes colour. . . . I wonder why?"

She threw down the mirror and thrust her fingers into the hollows of Janson's cheeks. "Pauvre homme, you have no colour to change."

Janson moved away. "I'm all right—I don't think you'll want me much longer. Faustine is herself again."

### XIX

DAILY Noyada had asked the same question of Janson until Janson refused to answer; daily he asked the nurse, and the reply was always in the affirmative.

"Will she live?" was the question. "And will her recovery be complete?"

He said "yes" in reply to the second question, for it seemed the only answer the alien could understand; of course they thought it was the answer he required—and it is always easy to give that which one does not possess.

Noyada expected Faustine to question him, to tell him herself that she either wished to live or that she wished to die, and if the latter to remind him of his promise. He was glad that she did not refer to it, for fear had never left him since he had used his knife on Brooke Haigg. The surgeon had never left him. Wherever he went, wherever he hid, the man whose life he had tried to snatch followed; through the streets, into the theatres and music halls, into his own little

room in Soho, and even into the noisy foreign restaurant where he tried to drown his thoughts and fill his stomach with courage since his heart lacked it.

But the steel of the surgeon's knife, like the steel of his eyes, pursued him. He knew he would not die, he was too strong. Brooke Haigg, Noyada knew, would live and demand revenge: he realised that was just, but he did not know what form his revenge would take, and he was afraid to think.

Englishmen were like no other men in the world; they were damnably just — at any rate those who had not trafficked with America.

He hated them, these cold, pale-faced Englishmen, but he acknowledged they possessed everything a proper man should possess, save emotion. And their emotions were those of the pig-sty. They worshipped a false god, the god of Hypocrisy, and for that one sin he loathed them.

Haigg, in spite of his strength, bowed his knee with the others to this false god. Sometimes, whilst Haigg's life still hung in the balance, Noyada wished his knife had gone home and found his heart; at other times he prayed that the surgeon would live.

And now that his prayers had been answered, he walked the streets in fear and hid himself in the darkest parts of the foreign quarter, waiting for

the message from Brooke Haigg, and wondering why he did not send for him.

Faustine recovered, and Janson said she was well enough to be moved: but she remained at the home. When the sun shone she was allowed to motor slowly through the park; once Janson himself took her through Richmond to Windsor, and Noyada watched the motor flash down Piccadilly; and he wondered what Haigg was doing, and why he was not with Faustine.

In his own country revenge would have been swift and sure; this waiting in a strange land robbed him of his nerve. Haigg would not strike as he had struck, the god he worshipped forbade that; moreover, Noyada knew that he despised him too much. No; he would have him arrested, tried in the brutal British courts by a judge who only considered justice, and knew nothing of the emotions, sentiments or passions of mankind.

If that happened, Noyada knew his fate: he would be imprisoned for many years, perhaps for life. And Faustine, for whom he had waited in the gutters, would never be his. All those men he despised, and who in turn despised him, would possess her.

And he felt on his breast the little ridge of skin where Faustine had stabbed him some years ago. It seemed strange that he had returned the blow,

striking not her, but the man he feared would be her lover. But as yet Faustine did not know what had occurred between Haigg and her husband, and Noyada tortured himself wondering what she would do when she did know. He understood women well enough to guess that she would either despise him utterly or else, by chance, see him in the light of a hero. The Southern blood flowed in her veins, blood warmed by the same sun that ripened the purple grapes. A life for a life, and a blow for a blow—such a code was Faustine's no less than his.

He received the summons he expected one morning: it came by letter, and not, as he had dreaded, through the brutal British constable. Flight had never occurred to him, for he was brave after the manner of his kind, and would fight for Faustine to the end. Haigg did not ask him to go to Bruton Street, but, to the alien's surprise, suggested lunch at the Imperial. The thought flashed that perhaps he was afraid to meet Noyada alone: but he dismissed the idea. Haigg, he knew, feared no one.

Then a strange thing came to pass: when he read the letter, Noyada looked at himself and his shabby clothes, and shook his head. This meeting that was to take place was a duel without doubt, a duel of wits. Doubtless, unclean and untidy he was picturesque, and he certainly was comfortable, but the English did not understand these things.

And Faustine, even she had a passion for the bath and the white linen.

So Noyada went out, and from the bank he withdrew quite a large sum of money, and at a theatrical costumier's he purchased for himself a new, fashionably cut suit of clothes; in another shop a white shirt, white collar, black tie: a pair of patent leather boots completed his outfit. To the barber's and his toilet was complete, and again he smiled—a smile of satisfaction but not of content. He was very uncomfortable, though, he had to confess it, very beautiful. He looked quite British, terribly respectable, terribly serious. He made his way to the Imperial Restaurant, walking with difficulty, and beginning to understand by his feet why the English seldom smiled.

Haigg smiled—when he saw Noyada. "At last we meet again, Monsieur Noyada; I am delighted."

Their table was in the middle of the restaurant, a big bowl of red roses stood in the centre. The lunch had been carefully and wisely chosen, and the cook had taken pains to do his duty; the wine was Cliquot, and would have been called sweet by a degenerate. Noyada was too uncomfortable and too surprised to talk.

Did Sir Brooke Haigg possess a strange and subtle sense of humour?—else why had he prepared this epicurean banquet for him! Faustine

was not, nor Janson. And the surgeon smiled and talked of strange things—of Noyada's countrymen, her authors and her great artists, her sculptors, her brilliant past, and the future that lay before her; of her beautiful women and her brave men.

And the wine was good, and rich and fragrant; the roses conjured again the dreams Novada had dreamed: the dreams of blue seas and blue skies Haigg referred to, and the cottage nestling among the mountains . . . where one day he would take Faustine. And so gradually he forgot the patent leather that pinched his feet, and the stiff collar that cut his neck, and the tight coat that held him as in a vice. Haigg was bon camarade, and the alien thawed, and remembering he was a guest, amused his host. It was his hour, so why not take it? He could show the surgeon that after all he was a man, brave and witty; a man who in his time had served his country, and would have fought for her had occasion called: he was a man of intelligence, a man who had travelled far and seen much. He was no longer ragged and unclean, waiting and watching from the gutters.

Sapristi! He, Noyada, was a great man, a fine fellow, forsooth. Was he not Faustine's husband? No man could rob him of her; no man could rob him of the honour and glory she reflected. And he was wealthy too. Sapristi, he was a great man.

And Haigg smiled. He read the alien's thoughts as he read the alien's fears. He chose a long, thin cigar, and handed him a match; the waiter brought Turkish coffee, and filled the wide-lipped glasses with a little old brandy, then left them: Noyada leaned back and closed his eyes.

"Ah, this is good; yes, it is very good."

Haigg nodded, and resting his elbows on the table, moved the bowl of roses aside. "And now, Monsieur Noyada, shall we talk business?"

"Business?" Noyada lazily allowed a stream of smoke to escape between his lips. "I do not quite understand?" The wine had given him courage, but robbed him of cunning.

Haigg stroked his forehead thoughtfully. "I am glad to say the operation I performed on your wife has been completely successful." Noyada started then, for he remembered, and he changed colour. "She leaves the home to-morrow. I advised her to go to my convalescent home in Surrey, but she did not seem inclined to do this, said she intended returning to work at once. But that I forbade."

" You---"

"Yes."

There was silence between the two men for a while. Noyada looked round the restaurant and realised for the first time that they were almost alone, nearly all the tables were deserted.

A few waiters hovered sleepily in the background; he saw them through a mist of tobacco smoke and shaded electric light. The song of London came from the streets very faintly. The glass by his hand rattled. Was he trembling?

What had he to fear? He was Faustine's husband; he was a man like Brooke Haigg—well fed, well dressed, prosperous, and for the moment even respectable. Haigg spoke again.

"Your wife must take a rest, she must have change of air; but since she objects to England, I suggested the south of France or Italy."

"Italy!" Noyada started to his feet, but he caught Brooke Haigg's eye and reseated himself with a mumbled apology. "Italy—yes, that is good. She shall go to Italy; I will take her."

Haigg pulled his chair close to the table and leaned across. "She will not go with you, Monsieur Noyada."

The alien moistened his lips and looked at his empty glass. Haigg refilled it with brandy.

"Indeed—whom will she go with then?—alone?"

"I shouldn't advise that," Haigg said quietly. "She should take someone who will interest and amuse her. Someone she will obey."

Noyada put down his cigar, it was not so easy to smoke now; he moistened his lips with the

brandy. "Do you forget that I am her husband? I know how to look after Faustine, and she will obey me."

"But she will not take you."

Noyada had avoided looking directly at Haigg. He could do so no longer: the surgeon met his gaze. Noyada blustered: he fenced with words. "Why not speak straight, that is your English boast. If I do not go with her, who will? You!"

"If she asks me"—he shrugged his shoulders. "I don't know; I fear I am too busy."

"You—" Noyada struggled for self-control. The glasses on the table commenced to rattle again; the majority of lights in the restaurant were extinguished, and the fog of smoke grew more dense.

"Perhaps you'll explain," Noyada stammered. Unconsciously his left hand sought across the table cloth a knife. Haigg watched and smiled. Noyada looked up, and started back with an oath.

"Forgive me for reminding you at such a moment, Monsieur Noyada, that you are in my debt. You will remember that I agreed to do my best to preserve your wife from a dangerous disease which threatened her. I told you I have succeeded."

"That is all right," Noyada whispered; "you shall be paid, at once."

"I have been paid. I don't refer to her case now, but to yours. You placed another life in my hands, your own—and no fee was mentioned between us."

"My life . . . "

Haigg removed his elbows from the table, chose another cigar, and leaning back, lit it. "Yes; and your life is still in danger. Perhaps I should have spoken before—you thought yourself secure. But it's my duty to tell you you are mistaken. Your life is still in my hands."

Noyada pushed his chair back, and turning round, tried to pierce the smoke and the gloom. But the wine which had filled him with courage was playing tricks: he saw nothing now but a vague outline of ghostly things; white tables which danced around him; shadowy forms moving in the distance. He took his handkerchief from his pocket, a clean white handkerchief, and smoothed his forehead with it.

"Well, Sir Brooke Haigg, tell me what fee you require. You have not been acting fairly—you should have told me before."

"I was waiting to see whether you had any suggestion to make. I gave you a chance. If you couldn't pay, you could run away. I gave you your chance; you haven't taken it."

Noyada again sipped the brandy. It was unwise, he knew, but the strength he had lately

boasted was slipping between his fingers. "Brave men do not run away."

"But you are not a brave man."

He wished the knife which he had touched on the table was in his hands now; he wished he were alone with Haigg; he wished he had drank just a little less wine, then he might have had the strength and the courage. But now it was too late, his hands were both trembling, and his legs. He could not see Haigg clearly; he looked as illusive as the dancing white tables, as the waiters in the distance, as the red electric globes gleaming here and there overhead through the smoke.

"Say what you have to say and let me go!"

Haigg yawned. "If you are willing to go, then I have nothing to say. But you must go quickly, and never return."

Noyada rose to his feet. The waiter approached, but Haigg waved him away.

"Are you what they call in England playing the game?" Noyada cried, advancing a step, and supporting himself against the table. "Though you do not speak straight, I think I follow your meaning. You wish to get rid of me because you want"—his teeth met, and the last two words came indistinctly between them —"my wife."

"I want to ensure your wife's health and happiness, yes. Sit down!"

Noyada obeyed. "Yes, I will hear all you have to say. I will listen to the pious Englishman. Mon Dieu, it is a good game you play; we do not so in our country, but then we are not gentlemen, nor respectable. We do not cheat at cards or at love, no, and we do not gamble with life. Our enemies know what to expect—we strike with a knife."

"As you struck me?"

"Yes, as I will strike you again."

"Thanks; that's what I want to know." Haigg threw his table napkin on to the table. "We have dallied a long time over lunch, we had better go. My motor is waiting outside, so I can drive you to Vine Street."

"No!" Noyada's voice rose. "Wait . . . it is not too late, I can alter my mind. . . . Wait—this thing you suggest is monstrous, horrible. You cannot be in earnest-you are playing a joke with me. . . Yes, I see you You are an Englishman, and we are smile. in England, of course it is a joke. But, mon Dieu, you frightened me. . . . I-sell you my wife," he laughed; "not a good joke, Brooke Haigg. No, no, I know, as you have always seen me, I do not look up to much, as you say; I gave you cause to think I did not respect my wife, much less love her-because I wait in the gutters, and my clothes are old, and I do not always shave when I should. But

you have only looked on the outside of me, I will show you my heart, then you will understand. . . . Do not interrupt, wait until I have spoken. . . .

"You see Faustine has always been free, because to dance, it is her life. I will make no pretence with you, she loves it better than she loves me. But-and I do not speak without knowing—she has never given her love to any man; she plays with them, yes—that is why I laugh sometimes. She is just bon camarade; if they give her jewels why should she refuse? She is only a woman, is she not? and a woman's life is short, and her beauty soon fades, and then those fools who now hover like bees about a hive will forsake and neglect her. But not so I, Monsieur. . . . That is why I go with her everywhere, that is why I care not for my personal appearance, that is why I save every penny and lock it in the banks; why I am keeping it and my heart for Faustine when she is tired of the dance, and those who would be her lovers are tired of her. . . . It is not fair of you, Monsieur, to make joke of me, but I understand. And you understand now, is it not so?"

"Yes, I think I understand; it is very interesting." Haigg pulled his chair to the table. "Go on, my friend."

"Ah!" Noyada sighed and wiped the sweat

from his face. "Permettez moi." His hand was still unsteady, he helped himself to more brandy. Haigg watched him, his face a mask.

"You understand everything now, is it not so? Why, when I thought she was dead, my poor Faustine, I lost my head and would kill youyou who tried to save her life—have saved her life. You will forgive me, you have forgiven me, is it not so? We are friends—I can drink to you, Sir Brooke Haigg, the greatest man of his day."

He raised his glass to his lips and emptied it. When he put it down, he tried to wave away the smoke that obscured his vision; he leaned forward and looked into the face of the man whose health he had drunk. Perhaps he read that all was not yet well, for the colour that had flushed his cheeks died away. "You do not reply. Will you not raise your glass to me?"

Haigg nodded, but remained silent. Novada listened to his own heart-beats and waited, counting them.

"Certainly, I will drink to your future health and prosperity, presently," Haigg said at last. am afraid you are labouring under a delusion, Monsieur Noyada. As I said, I saved your wife's life, and in doing so I am fully repaid. But your life still hangs in the balance; we musn't forget that, must we?"

The alien drew his breath with difficulty.

joke—pretty stale now. Let us say no more. I must be going."

"If you go, you will go with me; and I must, much against my will, hand you over to the police."

Noyada realised his fate at last. For a moment terror overcame him, but he had drunk too much wine to be sober for more than a few seconds. Some means of escape would present itself, he assured himself. Brooke Haigg was clever, but it was easy to outwit an Englishman.

"I don't quite yet understand," he stammered to gain time.

"It's very simple," Haigg replied. "Since in your own words you have shown me your heart, I confess I respect, even sympathise with you. But you have only shown me your own heart and described your own feelings. What about Faustine? She was married to you I know, long ago, in Spain or Italy, wasn't it? The legality of that marriage we won't discuss now. But she has never really been your wife; she is no more your wife now than she is—mine, shall we say? And she doesn't love you. Therefore, you must give her up."

"I must give her up?"

"Yes."

"You mean you will force me to . . . . because you love her yourself."

"I shall force you to give her up—that is sufficient."

Noyada laid his arms on the table and buried his face in his hands. For a long time he sat so. When he looked up tears from his eyes mingled with the sweat on his face. "I cannot fight; you have me in your power. I tried to take your life, I failed: so you will take from me more than life. . . . Mon Dieu, do you know what it means to me?"

"And what it may mean to her?"

"I have never done her any harm. On the contrary, it is I who have taken care of her, who have worked for her, who have saved what money she did not spend. I have been her servant . . . and you would rob me even of my service."

Haigg looked at him and smiled. "You'll soon forget, my good friend; only a month or two ago you wanted my life, a week later you had forgotten. There are other men in your own country whose lives you can take, and there are other women."

"There is only one woman, and you have discovered it."

Haigg closed his eyes. "I am beginning to think that is so, but I am not quite sure yet."

Noyada rose. "You must give me time. How long will you give me?... What have you said to Faustine?"

"Nothing: she doesn't know yet that you tried to kill me. She need never know."

Noyada threw back his head and smiled. "I shall tell her that myself. You cannot rob me of that. . . . But Dr Janson knows. What if I tell Dr Janson everything? What would he say, do you think, to the bargain you are driving? Faustine or my life, that is what it is! And if I give you my life, if they take me to your cursed prison, and try me and imprison me, what will your London say then, if I tell this story to the judge, this bargain you would make with me? You may rob me, Sir Brooke, but if you do I can ruin you."

"You may, if you like. I think I should be grateful to you. For it is Faustine and you who have taught me to despise that which I treasured most of all—my work and my reputation. She has helped me to fame, and having won it, I am ready to chuck it aside. I want nothing the world can offer me. You may have it all and welcome."

Noyada nodded. "All save Faustine?" He laid his hands on the table, and swaying, leaned across it. "I hate you. I warn you, if I ever get the chance, I shall kill you; and I will not bungle a second time. But for what you have said I respect you; you did not speak like an Englishman that time. . . . I wonder if you know what you did say—that you would lose the world to gain a woman! That is what you said."

"Hardly a woman, Monsieur Noyada," Haigg whispered, rising too. "Something less—or something more, eh?" And he laid his fingers lightly on Noyada's chest, just over the place where the line of broken skin denied the accusation.

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OUTSIDE the restaurant the two men went their separate ways. Brooke Haigg entered his car and drove round Hyde Park: he wanted air.

Noyada, directly the big car disappeared, called a taxi-cab, and told the man to drive quickly to Bruton Street: he wanted blood.

He saw it as he drove along, blood everywhere: the sky red and the people crowding the pavements, their feet scarlet. His own hands, there was blood on them too. Directly the door of the nursing home opened, he hurried past the servant upstairs to his wife's room. She had just returned from a drive, and was lounging lazily in an armchair pretending to drink afternoon tea à l'Anglaise with Janson to amuse her. It was Fate, and Noyada resignedly threw up his hands: had Faustine been alone, he would not have seen blood in vain.

He cursed himself under his breath when he saw Janson, but when he had greeted him and touched his wife's hand, he grew calmer. The

presence of the physician always soothed him: he had noticed this on several occasions.

"You are good to entertain my wife now she has recovered, Dr Janson," he said abruptly, afraid if his tongue were silent his hands would be at work.

"He has not entertained me for several days," Faustine grumbled; "he just comes and looks at me and runs away again. But you have not come to look at me and run away, Sigismund; what's the matter?"

Noyada had sat down, but he rose now and walked up and down the room. Janson made a pretence of going. Faustine would not let him.

"Well, Sigismund," she said, stifling a yawn, "what has happened? Don't tramp up and down, it worries me. Who do you want to kill now?"

Noyada stopped abruptly before her: he could not fence with Faustine, he would not. "You or the Brooke Haigg."

She smiled. Janson, watching her, saw in that smile something of the expression of the wild beast who slays—and is slain. Noyada continued to march up and down the room.

"And why do you want to kill us?" Faustine asked, pouring him out a cup of tea. "Drink this; it is good for the nerves. English people live on it." Suddenly she laughed. "La-la, what have you done with yourself! Oh, my poor Sigismund, have you gone mad? why are

you dressed like that? No wonder you want to kill!"

Noyada eagerly drank the tea, then seated himself by Faustine. "Listen, and you too, Monsieur Janson, listen, and I will tell you everything. You know the beginning, how, when I thought Haigg had failed in his operation, I tried to kill him."

"You!" Faustine was on her feet in an instant. "You tried to kill the Brooke Haigg!... Now I understand, and he said nothing—pretended he was ill... You!"

She released him as suddenly as she had seized him, and sank back into the chair, laughing. "And he lets you live. Sigismund, you are a fool; Brooke Haigg will make you pay for that."

Noyada spoke through his teeth. "He presented the bill to-day. Listen, I will tell you."

They listened, but when Noyada had finished, neither Janson nor Faustine spoke. The former sat with his hands folded together, his brows knit. His face was very serious. But Faustine lay back in the long armchair, her hands playing with the lace of her robe, her feet crossed; the shoes had fallen to the ground, the curves of her body were delicately outlined: and she was smiling.

Noyada looked at her, knelt beside her, and the tears swam in his eyes.

"My poor Sigismund," she said softly, speak-

ing his own language, and in a voice she might have used to a dumb brute she had unwittingly hurt. "I knew this would come one day, but I put off the day by dancing on the heels of time. I warned you I must not stop dancing—no, not for one night. . . . And now it has come."

"You love the Brooke Haigg," Noyada choked. Faustine shook her head and looked away, her eyes towards the ceiling. "I love no man, yet. The day will come, indeed, I know it is coming, and so, Sigismund, you must give me up: yes, I arrange it—that is fair. We have been nothing to each other, good comrade c'est tout. You have served me well, Sigismund; I have paid you well. Think, you can return to your own sunshine land, and buy many vineyards, and sell sour wine for the English restaurants. And I shall be free. I did not give myself to you, I am not giving myself to any man. . . One day, perhaps soon, I shall give myself to Love."

Janson leaned forward: "I love you, Faustine."

Noyada laughed. "You say that as if you were the first, or would be the last, to say it. I knew, Monsieur, that you loved her. Mon Dieu! if only the Brooke Haigg loved her, I should not care; it is because he does not love her that I care; it is because he does not love her that I hate him; it is because he does not love her that I would kill him." He rose to his feet and drew himself

up with something of dignity. "It is not love that Faustine wants from man, it is not caresses or soft words; she wants hate and blows rather: she wants to feel the whip, the knife... to him who strikes her she will give herself. I know, I have not watched all these years for nothing; I have not loved her all these years for nothing."

He turned to her. "Tell me, Faustine, is it not true that on our wedding night, when I sought your lips and you gave me instead the stiletto, had I plucked the knife from my breast, and beaten you as you lay there laughing and scorning, had I treated you then as I would have treated a dog that bit me, things would have been different between us two? You would have learnt to love me, at least to have obeyed me. I should have made you my own. That is so, is it not, Faustine?"

She lowered her eyes and the smile left her face: she looked at her husband with a little surprise and a little pity, and she spoke quite gently, holding out her hand to him as she did so. And Janson, watching her, was startled at the sudden change, a change from womanhood to girlhood—in voice and expression.

"Why, yes, of course, Sigismund. Love—one can never quite answer for that. Any man, had I liked him enough—and I did not dislike you—would have made me his. But now . . . . why now only love—and la danse."

#### XXI

The three men met again—Moir-Brown, Haigg, and Janson. They met, not in Haigg's rooms, but in the house of the general practitioner. The general practitioner, being a sentimentalist, wanted to congratulate his two friends on their successes: the surgeon on the operation, reports of which had been telegraphed to every important city in the world, and set the tongues of priests, press agents, and medicine men wagging.

And the woman lived. Emphasis was laid on this fact.

"Great as have been the triumphs of surgery during the past fifteen years, all else it has done has been eclipsed by the marvellous operation which the famous surgeon, Sir Brooke Haigg, performed a short time ago upon that famous and beautiful dancer, La Belle Faustine."

Thus spoke the majority of English and foreign newspapers. The organs of the profession, if not less laudatory, were more critical, and entered into

full details. It looked as if Haigg would eventually achieve Westminster.

America was jealous of his success, and discovering that his father had paid a flying visit to Chicago, that city tried to claim him as one of its citizens. Perhaps it was strange that Haigg never visited the New World, where life is of so little account, and flesh and blood are cheap. Renewed offers were now made to attract him: numerous millionaires and their wives contracted extraordinary internal complaints which only the knife could cure, and cabled to Haigg, offering him fees, if he would cross the ocean and operate, that staggered the arithmetical powers of the telegraph operators.

Faustine even was not spared: agents sat on her doorstep, cheque-book in one pocket and agreement in the other. They did not now care whether she danced or not, she was far more valuable as a freak than as an artist.

It therefore happened that Janson's absurd attack against the Medical Hierarchy on the mania for mutilative operations was quickly forgotten, save by the less successful men who had smarted under the lash.

The unwarranted attack on a great profession, practising the greatest of the healing arts, had been answered in an almost miraculous way by the now acknowledged leader of that profession. And so as Brooke Haigg flashed meteor-like

across the sky, Janson fell, a pale, insignificant star, seen for a moment, then forgotten—extinguished in the abyss of blue.

Yet the two men met in Moir-Brown's study to receive the congratulations of the general practitioner, the man whose life was spent in examining tongues, feeling pulses, and prescribing poisonous drugs. Neither expected to see the other, so the surprise was mutual.

"You are both dining with me at the Pall Mall to-night, and Madame Noyada has promised to join us. I have asked Boriani to keep me a table on the balcony, where we can eat without being seen. You musn't refuse—you see I haven't given you the chance of refusing—it may be the last time we four shall meet."

Haigg smiled. "Optimist!" Janson said nothing.

"I'm an old dodderer, always a year behind the times, so I have only just heard rumours—" he hesitated a little awkwardly—" well, of our friend Janson's outspoken criticism. I'm afraid, henceforth, we three will travel different ways."

"I am afraid we shall." Janson looked at Haigg. "I ought to have realised it before. You have been generous, Haigg; I've been a selfish fool and allowed you to place yourself in an invidious position."

Haigg smiled, and turned to Moir-Brown. "So he wants us to break bread together before

we part, you and Janson, Madame Noyada and myself. What about the little husband, eh?"

Moir - Brown raised his eyebrows. "Good Lord, I forgot him. You know Madame Noyada never looks like a woman with a husband, not even a continental husband. I don't believe I've ever met him!... Is he her husband, Haigg?"

The surgeon shrugged his shoulders again. "I don't know. In a moment of curiosity she married him, I believe: a marriage of inconvenience. Now she'll divorce him or he'll divorce her."

Janson sat with his back to the window, silent, motionless. Moir-Brown was interested. "Good gracious, why? Surely she doesn't want to really get married?"

"He's a nuisance, an incubus," Brooke Haigg said shortly. "If she doesn't get rid of him, he'll get rid of her. A woman married to a man who is content to stand in the gutters with a knife in his pocket, and worship her from a distance, isn't safe."

No more was said at the moment, but when Moir-Brown left the room to say good night to his children and tuck them up before they fell asleep—sentiment affects men in a variety of ways—Haigg drew a chair to the table, and, sitting down, commenced to draw diagrams on a sheet of notepaper.

- "Janson, I'm afraid we shan't see much of each other after to-night. I shall be sorry for that."
  - "So shall I."
  - "But they gave you a chance, didn't they?"
- "The High Priest?" Janson grinned. "Forgive me, old chap. Oh yes, they gave me a chance, thanks to you; but I ask you, could I take it? No; what's written cannot be erased."
- "Nonsense. Even I, after writing a letter, have torn it up."
- "But you haven't asked the recipient to return your letters?"
- "Never had an opportunity," Haigg said sharply: "never written a love-letter. . . . Of course I knew, having hoisted the black flag, you wouldn't haul it down."
- "So you, even you, look upon me as a pirate?"

Haigg hesitated a little while: the diagrams he was drawing were interesting—surgically: sections of a possible operation on the heart. Problem—to take away a third part and leave the whole.

- "Well, you are, aren't you? Do you know, Janson, I envy you a little. You are free: I'm in chains; every day I forge a fresh link. My God, how sick I'm getting of the game!"
  - "You-"
  - "Yes, I; you sound surprised—by Jove, almost

look frightened. No, your book has not converted me, but it showed me that at any rate you have been carrying on a flirtation with Truth, and I—I haven't even been introduced to her."

Janson said nothing; he turned away and stood with his back to the surgeon, looking out of the window. The street was already in darkness, but darkness helped him now more than the light. Brooke Haigg confessing that he did not know Truth! It was fantastic.

"Do you think I'm right in getting rid of Noyada? I'd like to know your opinion, though I shouldn't dream of taking your advice."

"I don't know why you want to get rid of him: motive alone matters."

"He's the wrong man, that's all. . . . Janson, Faustine will have to go away, she'll have to change her mode of life. She'll have to give up playing the fool."

Haigg heard the physician draw his breath sharply. He turned as if to speak, but checked himself. The surgeon smiled.

"Can you imagine what would happen if he and she were left alone together with nothing to do but—exist? I need not describe what would happen, need I? He's not a man, and she's not a vegetable. It seems a pity she should be wasted like that. One day we should pick up the Sunday Drain Pipe and read a highly coloured description of a popular ghastly tragedy on the Continent."

"Faustine will not dance again?"

Haigg tore up his diagrams. "I don't think so—or certainly not for a year or two. I'm going to send her away for a long rest, Janson."

Janson squared his shoulders. "You don't know what you're talking about. And you think you know Faustine! You'll send her away for a long rest! Has the devil ever rested, do you think, since the priest first created him?"

"That is why I want to get rid of Noyada. Someone will have to take care of her, someone will have to amuse her: someone will have to save her in spite of herself."

"And is there one man living who could do all these things for Faustine?"

"At least she might try to find one. I am not bargaining with Noyada for his wife: after he saw you the night before last at Bruton Street, I got the truth out of him: I knew I should. The marriage that took place in Italy or somewhere was only a hole-and-corner affair, probably wouldn't hold good for an instant. I never imagined he had any legal claim on her: a few gold pieces go a long way in a small Italian town. Besides, do you think that the mumbling of a few words, or the signing of a piece of paper agreeing to an impossible bargain, can seriously influence the life of any man or woman?"

"And this from a high priest!" Janson could not resist the retort. "I think it can."

"I beg your pardon, or the courts for divorce and probate wouldn't exist. But you haven't answered my question—am I right in kicking Noyada out of Faustine's life? I'm frightening him away, that's all; why shouldn't I?"

"Why do you ?-that's the question."

Moir-Brown interrupted the answer, and the three men drove to the Pall Mall restaurant and waited for Faustine. She came soon after they arrived, and each man experienced an unexpected shock. For each had seen her for some time past through coloured glasses: each had seen not a woman but a case. Haigg had theoretically greeted her with his knife, Janson with his ferments, and even Moir-Brown with his drugs. But now they sat around the board with a white cloth, a vase of roses from her own country in the centre of the table, and they broke bread together, and lifting their glasses clinked them.

And so the three men sought, as it were, after a long interval of time, Faustine, the woman and the dancer, again. Her dress was black, unrelieved by any colour: a long black feather fell from her hair on to her white shoulders: at first the effect was ghastly—just black and white.

But when the glasses were empty, and she had eaten a little, a flush stole across her cheeks, like dawn in a winter's sky: a little colour touched her lips, and her eyes grew brighter. But the fiery

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serpents Brooke Haigg had once seen coiled in her hair were no longer there: the boldness of neck and the breadth of bosom had disappeared.

The dinner was good, and the wine: yet something was lacking at the feast.

Moir-Brown was troubled: he had long ago promised himself this little dinner to his friends. He knew, when he first met Faustine, that she was only a bird of passage, fluttering for a while her wings about the doors of his house. But she had brought with her youthful memories, desires and dreams: when she went, they too would go, and so he wanted to drink bon voyage to them and her. The sentimental general practitioner, with a fond wife and a large family, drinking bon voyage to Faustine, the dancer, in a London restaurant!

"Why do you all look at me so curiously?" Faustine asked at last. "Have I changed, then?"

They started guiltily: and Brooke Haigg replied bluntly with the truth.

"Yes, but I have only just noticed it, and I am responsible for the change, Faustine."

She laughed. "I shall be myself in a few days—give me more wine, and perhaps in a few minutes. I know I look like an Englishwoman to-night, don't I? You can see my bones—I almost thought I heard them rattle when Marie dressed me. Ugh! they will rattle when I dance—and I have news for you: next week you'll see Faustine as she really is again."

Haigg laid down his knife and fork. "What do you mean?"

"I go back to the theatre, I go back to the dance." The colour deepened on her cheeks, and the old light returned to her eyes. She raised her glass: "La danse!" She emptied it, but her hand trembled a little as she put it down. "I wonder if they have forgotten. It will not matter if they have, I shall win them again."

Janson and Moir-Brown bent over the table. Haigg alone looked at Faustine. "When did you settle this?"

"This morning: and you look surprised. It was easy enough. I could have danced to-night if I had chosen, but I remembered your warning. Wasn't that good of me? I said to myself, for a whole week I will eat until my bones are covered, then for the rest of my life I will dance. That was what you promised, wasn't it?" She turned to the other two men. "It was life or death he promised, and he has given me life."

She pressed her hands to her face; her cheeks were burning now. "Oh, mon Dieu! I do not know why, but I tremble all over when I think of it. To dance again . . . . the lights, the music, and all the faces in front of me from floor to ceiling, and the roar of voices. . . . To be free again, to be able to move after lying all those awful weeks on my back; to feel again, to love and hate—to make all the people feel, to make them

love me and hate me. . . . Oh, mon Dieu! mon Dieu! when I think of it, I feel I shall go mad!"

They all raised their glasses. "La danse, Faustine!"

Then the manager brought his famous autograph book for the great surgeon's signature. Faustine wrote her name beneath his.

She refused to drive home: she would walk, because she wanted fresh air, she said; she was so hot. The three men accompanied her to her door, and though she chattered all the way, they were silent.

"You're tired—we will not come in," Moir-Brown said, holding out his hand. "Good night, and God bless you! The children sent you this;" he placed a packet in her hand. She made no reply, but nodded good night.

Janson hesitated a moment, then held out his hand: "I shall see you again?"

"Of course!"

Brooke Haigg entered the house and followed Faustine upstairs. "You may smoke one more cigarette," he said, placing a chair for her; he remained standing himself. "I have something to say to you, and you must listen without interrupting."

Faustine gave a sigh of content and blinked her eyes sleepily. "I wonder what you are going to say: from you it is always the unexpected, and the unexpected is pleasant."

Haigg threw his cigar away. "This is not pleasant, Faustine—or I shouldn't be saying it."

She nodded, but her expression changed: "Now I think of it, mon ami, you have never said anything pleasant to me."

"I have never said anything pleasant to any woman. It isn't my business to be pleasant. The Great Healer, men have called me; but it is for you, of all women, to discover I am the great destroyer."

She laughed. "What do you mean? You haven't destroyed me?"

"I have, Faustine. I have destroyed your joy in life—it is the same thing. You may never dance again."

#### XXII

FAUSTINE laughed when she heard her sentence. It would have fallen pleasantly on the ears of other women, with husbands, lovers, or banking accounts. A year's rest, diluted with amusement that required neither the use of the nerves nor muscles: the pursuit of the sun.

Faustine laughed. Brooke Haigg had expected a scene: he was disappointed. She treated both verdict and sentence lightly, and laughed at the man who had been judge and executioner.

"I ought to be angry with you for cheating, but, ma foi, it is so droll I cannot help being amused. And I thought you understood women just a little! You have been so busy turning their bodies inside out, you have never looked at their brains, eh? The bargain I made with you and my own soul was that I should be cured or killed. You all told me I was cured, and I believed you."

"And you are cured. You've got to take care of yourself, that's all."

Faustine nodded; she knew what that phrase meant, and told the butcher so. There were towns and villages in her country and in France and in many other countries which, because the air is clean and God's sun shines brightly, are full of people taking care of themselves, nursing bodies weakened and broken by civilisation; living examples of nature's indignation and the advance of surgery. More than a quarter of the globe is peopled with patched-up men and women dodging Death, cheating that wisest of medicine men of his lawful prey.

"A rest-cure," Faustine laughed aloud. "I have no morals, my friend, but I know just one little thing, and I recognise just one little crime against the good God, and that is the Rest Cure! No; whilst I have legs and arms I work; but when I cannot work, I just go out."

"Faustine does not know the meaning of work."

She turned on him like an animal about to spring, checked herself, and laughed again. "You despise la danse as you despise l'amour, eh? Then you are a fool; the world is full of fools. I expect the gentleman you call John the Baptist despised dancers until he had the pleasure of watching his head served as a plat du jour at a king's feast. We danced in Babylon, in Rome, in Athens. You've never thought why women

dance, perhaps? You look upon it as a light thing, an amusement."

"What else is it?"

"Shall I give away my secret?"

"The pastime of savages, perhaps."

Faustine nodded. "And the nation that has no savage instincts ceases to exist. To-day you pay your women to dance as you pay your soldiers to fight. La danse keeps the fires burning in men's hearts. When those fires die, pouff!—it is all over. I know what I'm talking about. Every living thing dances, even the waves in the sea and the flowers in the fields: it is part of existence. Because I am a woman I have chosen it for my part, it is the whole of my existenceand you dare tell me to cease exist for a year! Mon Dieu, you are a philosopher who pulls a rose to pieces, finds how it has been made, discovers each atom of its composition—and misses its perfume. You know how I dance, the movement of each muscle, the effect on each nerve; you can calculate the rate my blood flows, and count each heart-beat; you might even classify my emotions and name them all in a dead language. With a little trouble you might discover the effect of my dance, but at present you are as ignorant of it as a child. But why I dance you do not know. Any more than when your country declares war you know the reason. 'In the interests of humanity,' generally suffices for English people:

it will suffice for me. A grain of truth is lurking somewhere in the greedy lie in each case."

The surgeon smiled. "Well, my good Faustine, shall I ask you, then, in the interests of humanity to stop dancing—for a year? Perhaps, then, you might——"

"You said just now-never!"

"I was testing your strength. Never, to a woman, seldom exceeds twelve months."

Moving a chair, quickly pushing back the table, Faustine stood before Haigg: throwing back her body, placing her hands lightly on her hips, she commenced the slow movements of a Spanish dance.

"You're a fool, Faustine," he said, watching her.

Showing her teeth she flung up her hands and snapped her fingers like the beating of castanets. Then she sang as she danced, softly, under her breath, a Spanish song of love and war.

Her body swayed: her bosom swelled, rebelling against the black bodice, her limbs scorned her petticoats. Her feet flashed to and fro, beating impatiently against the floor: faster and faster: her hair was shaken loose: light and life returned to it. And Haigg saw again the suggestion of serpents winding their golden coils about her head and neck.

Her lips were now as red as the rose she had stolen from the restaurant: she exuded the old

subtle scent . . . and the butcher drew back in his chair and folded his arms, breathing softly. She advanced closer, swaying to right and left. Her dress rose like a cloud blown from a dark horizon across a pale night sky.

"Stop! You'll kill yourself," he growled.

"Death is a lover who comes but once," she laughed. "You have given him to me. . . . Vive la mort!"

"Stop!"

Perfume clouded his brain like an anæsthetic: the red lips and the white arms, and the eyes whose depth he could not fathom, were unconquerable. He rose to his feet struggling against his fate, against his manhood, struggling against the instincts wise Mother Nature planted in his breast.

The struggle was vain. He had laughed at the work Faustine did in the world: like the philosopher he had dissected the rose; no part of it he had not seen and could not name—only the place where its scent was hidden had eluded him and been forgotten.

Faustine taught him that which nature blots from text-books.

"Stop!"

He had lost command of himself, and of her. It was too late. Lips and limbs were in league with heaven and hell for his salvation—or his downfall: the terms are synonymous.

He answered the call of the blood, and, stepping forward, made as if to take her in his arms. For a moment he felt the shadow of her embrace . . . . then she eluded him and mocked him with laughter.

But Brooke Haigg having discovered the perfume of the rose, desired further investigation. A month or so ago he had stripped Faustine of her petals one by one. Stalk, stamen, calyx, he held them all in his fingers: nothing had escaped him.

.... Something surely?—else why this change that had occurred within himself? Had Faustine blinded him, or were his eyes opened for the first time?

He whispered her name softly. He pursued; she eluded him. "Faustine . . . . Faustine!"

She replied with fierce laughter, and then flung a line from Swinburne at him.

"God said, let him that wins her, take and keep Faustine."

It occurred to the butcher then that this was perhaps what he desired: Faustine the dancer, not Faustine the woman. Neither stalk nor stamen nor calyx, but the invisible Well hidden in the heart of the flower whence came its perfume.

He had laughed at Faustine's work, but what had been his work, ever since he had received his license to kill? He had been as blind and

foolish, though not as harmless, as a botanist, who, crawling on hands and knees, presenting his back to heaven, exchanges flowers for specimens. He had cultivated a thirst for blood, formed collections of specimens of unnatural growth: he knew by heart every form which nature takes when she wishes to be revenged; if man were the likeness of God, he had changed that likeness himself with the cunning of a god.

His hands were bloody with the war he had waged against disease. He and nature had been bitter enemies, for he never ceased trying to finish work she had commenced and discarded, to restore that which she had wisely taken away, to build afresh the building she had overthrown, and sometimes to destroy the buildings of bone, flesh, and blood which she saw fit to erect. . . . He had unravelled all those secrets of hers: as a botanist tears the rose, he had torn the human flower to pieces again and again: nature might build, but there was nothing which she could build that he could not destroy, though often it necessitated the destruction of life itself. had begun to think he was as great as she: the game he played with her was like a game of chess, flesh and blood for pieces: every move she made on the board he knew how to check, and if ever she cried Checkmate! he had but to strike her queen, and lo! only dust remained, which, with a breath, he could blow away.

But now he discovered that even in the midst of the dust was the subtle scent: the perfume distilled he knew not how, or where.

An eternal fragrance. . . . And it was Life. That which he could not give, but had thought, until this moment, he could take.

He pressed his hands to his forehead: it burned. He brushed the fog from his eyes. . . . Faustine had fallen into her chair. Passion had left her and pain taken its place: her lips were no longer red; her limbs were limp, her hair almost lifeless, and her eyes veiled. She breathed with difficulty, and ever and again a cough shook her.

The surgeon returned to his normal state. He told himself sharply he had almost made a fool of himself: here was nature jeering at him again: whilst he dreamed she had quickly moved one of the human pieces on the great chessboard.

"What did I tell you? You'll kill yourself. Now perhaps you'll believe me and obey."

She opened her eyes and looked at him. He was astonished at the change: it was as if he had forgotten to give the anæsthetic before operating.

"Why didn't you tell me before?" she said softly, speaking like a child who has received a hurt. "Didn't you know this would happen?"

Haigg did not reply: he turned away, and

walking to the window, opened it. The room was suffocating: it was astonishing how foreigners feared air in their houses. He took a deep breath and mopped his forehead with his hand-kerchief.

"Why didn't you tell me before?... I thought I should know at once. I did not mean to live if this was going to happen. Noyada had promised... Poor Noyada—I think he would have failed me, though."

Haigg was beginning to grow irritated: her voice jarred. He would rather she had laughed at him or cursed him. "What had Noyada promised?"

"To kill me if the operation was only partially successful."

"And if it was quite a failure, to kill me!"

"No; that was his own idea."

Haigg shrugged his shoulders, and leaning out of the window, looked into the street. A barrelorgan was playing a tune, and he could just see, by the gas-lamps, ghoul-like figures bobbing to and fro—dancing. And he laughed: it was strange how many people, before they grew old, danced on the slightest provocation: it was strange he had not noticed the phenomenon before. Nature's method of building bone and muscle... that was all.

The perfume that had caused him mental aberration assailed his nostrils again, and he found

Faustine standing by his side. She, too, looked into the street.

"They are my children down there," she whispered. "Oh, la-la, how they hurt me sometimes."

"Hurt you?" He raised his head.

"Yes. When you cut me up didn't you see where their little hands had torn my heart?"

"Faustine, you are hysterical."

"You are blind . . . ."

She raised her eyes to his. "I did make you see for a moment just now, didn't I?"

He moved away. "Are you going to obey me, cancel this ridiculous engagement you have made, go away and rest for some months? Very probably you will return in perfect health."

"Sir Brooke Haigg, I thought you were a strong man," she said quietly.

"I am."

"Then let us talk sense together, you and I. I showed you my soul the last night I danced at the Alhambra. I let you have a glimpse of it again to-night. You know that I am the spirit of unrest: you know that we were not created to rest. You know perfectly well that if I am to live I must do something. People who don't work don't live: nature kills them. Oh, you and your kind, of course, cut bits out of them and sew bits on to them, and keep them hobbling round life's arena

like the old tram-horses hobbling round the bullring, patched up to last out a couple of shows or
so. But I am not a horse, thank God; and I am
not one of what you call the good women, thank God;
I am not so much in love with myself that I want
to sit in the sun, an eyesore and an excrescence.
If I cannot be a mother, a dancer, or a lover,
then—pouff, out I go, my friend. I am not
afraid of nature. When she has finished with me
as flesh and blood, she can make use of me as dust
and ashes. If I am done for, as you seem to
suggest, if my life is useless and will cost
thousands of pounds to keep going, I will take it
myself. I suppose my skeleton would be worth
at least a fiver in cash."

The reply that rose to the butcher's lips was unsaid. He held out his hand: "Then I have nothing more to say. Good night, Faustine."

"Good night, mon ami—and good luck. But—won't you warn the others what to expect before they give themselves to you?"

"I warned you," Haigg replied. "I have given you the chance of a long life. If you take my advice now, the chance is almost a certainty. If you disobey me—well, your blood be upon your own head."

He opened the door and she watched him go. "Tell Janson, won't you?" she whispered.

He stopped then, but turned quickly. The corridor was in darkness, and she could not see

his face: he shut the door and walked slowly into the street.

He could not forget that he was Sir Brooke Haigg, the great surgeon: he would not forget it. It was his duty to remember that he was a servant of the public.

A shepherd is not a necessity in a civilised country, but a butcher is.

#### XXIII

So Faustine danced.

Half the people who sought admittance to the theatre were unable to gain it. London welcomed her reappearance enthusiastically: men and women shouted her name, threw flowers at her feet. But Faustine danced badly.

Brooke Haigg was not in front to witness the triumph of failure: Janson was, and in the gallery, at the back, Noyada. He saw neither success nor failure, he only saw Faustine. Always, previously, he had shared her triumph; now he witnessed it, heard it as from a distance. Before, he had been of the storm that raged about her: now he was as a spectator standing at the door and watching the elements at war.

He joined bravely enough in the uproar: he shouted, he stamped, he applauded. He even wept, but no one noticed the tears: they dropped with the sweat from his face on to his shiny black coat.

When the dance was over he left the theatre,

mechanically walked to the stage door, and stood on the pavement smoking his cigarette, waiting. It was not until he saw her coming through the swinging doors that he remembered he had relinquished his right to wait for her, even in the gutter.

"Habit," he said aloud under his breath, and lit another cigarette. But he could not go: he drew back into the shadow, and leaning against a hoarding, waited, watching to see her pass through the crowd. It was amusing that he, who at anyrate had been her official husband for many years, should now be less than the dust beneath her feet. He was a little surprised that he had not killed her. He could not understand the calm that pervaded him. He tried to rouse his emotions by taunting them. Had he lost all honour, then, he asked himself; was he no longer a brave man, and had he forgotten how to use his knife?

He started when the gaslight fell on her face: he had never seen her look so ill before. She gazed over the heads of the small crowd that had gathered to stare at her, as if expecting to meet a friend: until she saw Noyada.

"Take my arm," she said quietly.

He obeyed, not from habit, but from surprise. The onlookers sniggered.

"Come home with me, Noyada; we have something to say to one another."

He mumbled a refusal—but found himself in the cab, and very soon in Faustine's rooms. He helped remove her cloak, gave her drink, and pushed her chair before the fire—for it was springtime in London.

She shook her head. "Tell Marie to bring a wrap and undo my dress."

He obeyed, waiting silently until the maid had finished and left the room. Then when Faustine sat down he found a seat on the other side of the fire. She lit a cigarette and smoked drowsily, but with each puff of smoke between her lips came a cough.

"Noyada, tell me, how often have you loved?"

The cigarette slipped from between his fingers and he raised his eyebrows. "Mon Dieu! how can I remember? It was so long ago. But since I have loved you, I have never loved."

"Did you ever love me, Noyada?"

He moved uncomfortably. "Why waste time? You have something to say to me?"

"I am saying it. I want to know what love means to a man."

"An Englishman?"

She shrugged her shoulders. "If you will."

"I have watched the Englishmen, and I think I know now. At seventeen he will ask to kiss your petticoat, and if you give him your hand, he will remember you for the rest of his life and carry your portrait in his heart. At nineteen he

will ask to kiss your lips; and if you refuse, he will, long years after, mumble over his whisky-and-soda that he once knew a good woman. At thirty he will demand—everything. And if you refuse, he will go elsewhere. At forty he will kiss—his children when they go to bed."

Faustine smiled. "You are forty, Noyada. And you have no children."

The alien shrugged his shoulders.

"What will you do?"

"I have not made up my mind yet. Antonio, at whose restaurant I sometimes eat, wants a partner. You know his place in Week Street? He might make money with a little more capital. Perhaps I shall join him. Then I may kiss my children—not when they go to bed, but when they rise in the morning. There is a difference, eh?"

Faustine nodded. "You might have been a poet, my Noyada."

"If I had remained in Italy. It pays better to be a restaurateur here. Anyway, one cannot fill the head and the stomach at the same time."

Faustine yawned. "Why didn't you kill me when I told you to go?"

Noyada shrugged his shoulders. "That was what I was wondering just now. I told the Brooke Haigg I would not—but I would tell him anything. Canaille!"

"He is strong, Noyada."

"Ro'st b'ef! Is it he who has won you at last, Faustine?"

"And should I tell you if it were so? No one has won me, Sigismund." She closed her eyes, dropping her cigarette into the grate. "I wonder how it is that I, who am always consumed by desire, tantalised with love as with the stings of a serpent—yet have never loved. Why is it, Sigismund?"

Noyada shrugged his shoulders and lit another cigarette. He kicked the fire into a blaze.

"I accused the Brooke Haigg of playing the fool with nature," she continued. "Haven't I done the same? This is the penalty."

"What do you mean—what penalty?"

"In future I dance but one dance, Sigismund, the dance of Death."

He puffed at his cigarette. "That sounds good, yes."

"It sounds fanciful, but it is fact. Death, like your man of thirty, he will come and ask everything, and then I shall wish I had listened to the youth of twenty."

She drew her chair a little closer to the fire and nestled into the cushions: the firelight flickered, chased shadows from knees to chin, danced in her hair. "I am so tired, Sigismund, to-night; I have never been tired in my life before. It was different when I was a child and played until I almost fell asleep, and the good mother put me

to bed and smacked me because I had torn my clothes. But there is no one to beat me now and put me to bed and send me to sleep."

"You have chosen," Noyada said unsteadily, rising to his feet. "You can alter your mind, you know; come with me now, come back to your country. You have had your will of the world. They cheered you to-night until they were hoarse—yes, even those dull English."

"I loved the dull English to-night—I loved them. I never danced so badly, and some of them knew it—I felt they did. They cheered me because I was an old friend, they cheered me because they knew me and liked me. I was, as it were, one of them. Think you, if I had danced so in Barcelona, would there have been cheers and flowers to greet me?"

"Well, then, now is your time to stop. They pelted you with flowers—they will fade soon, you know. You will fade, Faustine. But if you come with me I shall not care. Do you remember that little inn I once pointed out to you on a hill above Florence? There the roses climbing around your window will never fade, and the vineyard runs down the mountain side. We should do well there, you and I."

Faustine shivered, and stared into the fire. "Can you see me," she whispered, "can you see Faustine, the wife of a little innkeeper?... Grown fat and red, with a brood of children

clinging to her skirts, pouring the white wine, or grubbing like a beast of burden beneath the blazing sun among the vines? Oh, mon Dieu ! can you see me so, Sigismund?" She laughed. "I, who would dance, sweating with hands and knees on the brown earth, your beast of burden! My poor fool, you are too ambitious!"

"Perhaps you are right," he said between his teeth.

"I am," she replied. "Go to your friend Antonio and help him to feed the English: they love the table-d'hôte dinner, seven courses for one-and-sixpence. And doubtless, if you say you are the husband of Faustine the dancer, the good magistrate will grant you a licence to sell sour wine."

Novada's hand crept to his pocket again. "Sacré, you have no fear, Faustine."

"None. Good-bye, Sigismund."

She did not turn to see him go, but waited until she heard the street door close. A long time she remained, her knees wide apart, her elbows on them, her face between her hands, looking into the fire. She waited until the red had left the coals and they were dead. Then she went to her bedroom, switched on the lights, and pulling the long mirror forward undressed before it.

She looked at her naked beauty in the glass. "He was cunning," she whispered under her 232

breath, "he was very clever, the Brooke Haigg. But if I had loved him a little or too much, nature would have forgiven me. Now it is too late and so all this is wasted."

Brooke Haigg and Janson! She turned away quickly and switched off the lights. Were medicine men blind, then, that they had eyes and did not see, ears and did not hear? Yet she had made Brooke Haigg suffer.

And Janson?—why, Janson had told her he loved her.

#### XXIV

FAUSTINE viewed money in much the same light as she regarded the majority of men she met: counters in the game of life. Her world was full of both, and neither had, save perhaps in the abstract, ever worried her. When Haigg warned her that, if she persisted in dancing, she would surely die, she had laughed at him, snapped her fingers in Death's face, and driven to the theatre the following evening to her work.

The exhaustion that followed, mental and physical, was greater than it had been on the first night. Faustine tried not to notice it. Always in the past, no matter how desperately she had danced, the physical effect on her had been different: then weariness of body was almost delightful. Rather than weary, she used to feel like a wild thing of the woods which, having found its prey, has fed, is satisfied, and ready to enjoy the luxury of fatigue.

Always previously in her dance she had given and received. The kisses she had imagined on

her lips had been food and wine. But now, though she gave, she received nothing. She was conscious that the strength had gone out of her, so tired that when she crawled into bed she could not sleep. Those lovers of dead days, who were wont to embrace her, now pursued her with questions. Thoughts came and tantalised her: they pierced her like the banderillos of the bullring: vainly she tried to pluck them from her brain.

She grew afraid of the darkness: the night became terrible: no longer a mother bringing sleep to her children, but an ogress bringing a family of fears. And the worst fear of all was he whom she had often met with a smile and a jest, Death. Whenever she opened her eyes he was there standing by the foot of her bed looking at her. And he was not beautiful.

With the dawn he disappeared, and she laughed. But directly the lamps were lit she felt his presence again, and sometimes he pursued her to the theatre and even on to the stage. She wondered why the people always laughed and applauded: why the English women sometimes threw the flowers from their dresses at her feet. Did they not see Death grinning over her shoulder? did they not realise that she danced not as she had danced in the old days?

Even in her dressing-room, after the dance, she was seized with paroxysms of rage: she could not

bear the dresser to touch her: she would tear her clothes off, throw them on the ground, and sometimes trample on them. Then tears filled her eyes: and the woman who waited on her would leave the room—tears were more terrible than her rage, and quite incomprehensible.

In the theatre Faustine had always been beloved by the staff, not so much for the gold she distributed, but for smiles and good words. She gave to all because she remembered they were her comrades: the man in the flies, the men on the limes; he who stood in the prompt corner and cursed; the children and the call-boy. Though the audience was blind, it saw the change in Faustine. Her laughter became rare: and he in the prompt corner had no longer to send many messages to her dressing-room requesting her not to sing so loudly or laugh so vigorously.

She neither sang nor laughed now: but she often cursed. Once the blade, a mere toy which she often wore in her garter for her country's sake or mere sport, flashed from its sheath, threatening the woman who waited on her. But it had gone nearer Faustine's heart than hers.

She was growing tired of Death's silent vigil. Rather than be slain by him, she would give herself to him—since there was no other lover who desired her so keenly, or who waited with such patience through the long London night.

Neither Janson, nor Brooke Haigg, nor Moir-Brown came to see her dance now; or, if they came, they gave no signs.

Very often her footsteps took her to the house of the general practitioner, and sometimes she walked up and down on the pavement outside longing to enter and sit with him a while. He at least was honest and would tell her the truth; for he had nothing to gain by playing the part of cuckoo, turning Truth out of her nest, and giving Lie an opportunity of laying her eggs there. Moreover, he was different to other He had said often enough in his grave, men. old-fashioned English manner that he loved her; and when saying so taken his wife's hand and patted it. And she had nodded, and tenderly touched Faustine, saying she sympathised with her husband.

A good woman, Madame Moir-Brown, who had done her duty, allowed nature to make full use of her, and then push her on one side. And the children—Faustine longed to play with them again: they could, she knew, frighten away the thoughts that tormented her. At the same time she feared them: for children's eyes see clearly, and they are slow to learn the lesson man teaches, that all nature's laws are vicious, and his, virtuous.

Brooke Haigg, she knew, would neither send to her nor come. She had disobeyed him, and so

he would leave her to die. His work was the big thing in his life, and he refused to allow any woman to come between it and himself.

When she had first met him, she said to herself that he was a man worth conquering, and that she would conquer him. The boast had been a vain one—and the victory his.

A complete victory, for he had even driven Noyada away. At the time she was grateful for that, but sometimes now she regretted it. Previously, when she had seen him waiting outside the stage door in the rain or the fog, his presence had worried her, and sometimes her conscience pricked, sometimes pity for a few seconds drove laughter from her lips. Sometimes she would start and shudder: because she remembered why he waited. He was there to remind her that she would grow old, and possibly ugly, one day: to warn her that those who were now at her feet would in the end place their feet on her neck and trample her in the mud.

Nevertheless she missed him. Very often she looked for the familiar figure smoking the inevitable cigarette beneath the gas-lamp, or leaning lazily against the hoardings whereon a flaming poster of Faustine was pasted. No one waited for her now: sometimes perhaps a foolish youth or a few hysterical girls, or a crowd of curious provincials.

And at home, too, only silence greeted her:

the familiar smell of bad tobacco and garlic was always absent; Noyada's muddy footprints never stained the carpet, nor did his mandoline startle music from her sleep.

Faustine told herself angrily that it was the horrible English spring weather which weakened her—the east wind and the cold rain, and the constant return of fog. Haigg had threatened her to frighten her, so she would not acknowledge fear.

But the seed he had sown took root. He had spoken of the pursuit of the sun, and now the thought possessed a fascination for her. It was so long since she had seen it. That which sometimes wearily blinked on the wilderness of bricks and mortar was not the sun of the Southern lands: though it did call to her, when it set in a glory of red like hell flames devouring the fog and filth of the city, to hasten away and sleep in its warmth: the flowers that filled the streets and shops, stolen from her country, smiled sadly at her with their sweet, round eyes, whispering her away. Beautiful pictures and music hurt her instead of giving pleasure.

She was so tired, and they suggested rest . . . . and peace . . . . and love.

Love! Her body, in whose strength and beauty she had exulted, was barren, and her heart a garden wherein not a single flower had been planted: it had never lacked sunshine and

warmth—only the gardener, and seeds she could not sow herself.

One day, pretending a whim seized her, she wrote a long letter to Brooke Haigg, asking him to see her after the theatre and sup with her in her rooms. Directly it was written and sealed she felt happier.

Once again she felt the thrill which blood gives when it runs warmly through the veins. Before posting the letter she made her preparations. Arranged the supper: decided what she would wear and what flowers should fill the room: and just what she would say and do. And, of course, she also decided what he should say and do.

She laughed, it was such fun. Then, when the air castle was complete, she looked at the envelope—and tore it open. She would read the letter again before sending it. And instead of adding a postscript, she tore it up: Brooke Haigg would laugh if he received it, knowing she was weak.

The evening that he should have supped with her she was unable to finish her dance: what exactly happened she did not know. She lost consciousness suddenly, her limbs refused to obey, the walls of the theatre seemed to fall and crush her. When she recovered she found herself in her dressing-room, someone sitting beside her. She opened her eyes once but closed them quickly: she was ashamed and angry.

Why did they take her off the stage? she

asked. Why did they drop the curtain? Canaille! Was there not a man among them who could have struck her or kicked her? She would have recovered then and danced all right. Had they no sense, or did they wish to ruin her? She would never dance again now, never: they would hiss her off the stage.

She hurled a torrent of abuse, interrupted by prolonged fits of coughing, at the stage manager, the dresser—everyone.

The dresser left the room, and when Faustine had expended her wrath, the man by her side gave her something to drink and spoke her name. It was Janson. She looked at him and shrugged her shoulders.

"You!—why couldn't you tell them what to do?"

"I was in front, Faustine; directly I saw what had happened, I came round."

"And the Brooke Haigg—was he in front?"

Janson shook his head. "I haven't seen him for a long time. I'm not popular with my profession now, you know. I thought he was—attending you."

"Attending me!" She struggled to her feet. "Mon Dieu! you speak as if I were an invalid. And if I were, do you think Sir Brooke Haigg would attend me! Give me a cigarette."

Janson opened his case. "You shouldn't smoke."

Faustine lit it, and puffed a cloud of smoke in his face. "You all say the same thing: but you dream, and they lie. Tell me I should not live, my friend."

"I shall soon have to do so-unless-"

She sobered for a moment, and looked at Janson. "Unless?"

"You stop working at once, and go away."

She slowly nodded her head, and turning her chair, sat down at the dressing table, propping her face between her hands and looking into the mirror. "Why didn't you tell me before?"

"I thought you were in Brooke Haigg's care," Janson said unsteadily. "And I've only seen you across the footlights."

Her eyes lighted. "So you have come sometimes to see me dance?"

- "Once or twice in the week. Why?"
- "I thought you had all forgotten me."
- "All? Surely Haigg-"
- "Oh, Haigg," she interrupted fiercely, "always the Brooke Haigg! But he does not forget; he told me to go away, I refused. We are fighting, that's all, and he is winning." She laughed. "I suppose after what's happened, I had better say that he has won."

She turned round and held out her hand. "This would not have happened if I had listened to you, would it? Or, if the other thing had happened, it might not have occurred for a year

or two. I am not regretting," she added quickly, as Janson was about to speak, "and I am not blaming the Brooke Haigg. No; it was a wonderful thing he did. What threatened my life no longer threatens it: instead, it is something else." She lowered her voice, and glanced towards the door. "Janson, tell me what it is that is the matter with me."

"I can't, without an examination."

"Nonsense; that is professional jargon. Look at me... I know that you can tell me. What is it that will kill me?"

"Yourself, I think."

She smiled, and freeing her hand placed it on his shoulder: one bare arm touched his cheek: she saw him quiver, and the colour left his face.

"Oh, my friend, I think you understand me." "I love you."

Her eyes lighted. "Still? That is good. How do you love me? for you shall tell me now, if you like. . . . No, I do not think I want to hear. But I would like to know how much."

"No one can tell that, Faustine."

"Oh," she laughed, her mood changing as swiftly as the colour on Janson's face; "don't you know yourself, then? Mon Dieu, I believe you are right! Life itself is uncertain, but love——
If I put a knife in your hand now, and asked

you to kill me, would you do it? That is a good test in our country."

- "But a bad one in ours."
- "You are afraid."
- "I should not be. If the reason were good."

Her arms slipped over his shoulders until her hands met and she held him. "I believe you do love me. No, don't move. . . . It is true I am what you call done for, I think. Every day I grow more weak. Brooke Haigg told me to rest, and I laughed at him; I said when I could no longer work I would kill myself. But now I want to rest. . . . I want to go away, I don't quite know where, just away—on and on. I feel I would like to lie in a field covered with flowers and look at the sun shining in the blue sky, and sleep away this weariness. I should wake up refreshed. All my life I have lived . . . . but now I want to live. There is a difference, you know."

He nodded. "Well, you will go away?"

"No. Oh, it is not what you call just obstinacy now. Mon ami, I had a husband: he was good to me, and he saved my money. I sent him away.

... You see, in a sense he had saved both me and my money: I could not let him go away without either. I did not think at the time, but the other day I wanted a hundred pounds—oh, for something or other—well, it had to come out of my salary, there are no, what you call—savings.

And I said, 'I want to go away . . . . to rest.'"

Janson paced up and down the dressing-room. Faustine watched him.

"Could you rest with Brooke Haigg?" he asked abruptly.

"I don't know what I should do-with Brooke Haigg. Rest—no! Death with him, I think —one that would be worth waiting for. don't talk of him. I shut him out of my life -so." She struck her hand heavily on the dressing table. . . . "If ever I became myself again, and felt blood instead of water in my veins, why, then-" She straightened herself, and threw back her head, and for a moment her eyes flashed-"Why, then I might have something to say to him, and he to me. . . . Janson" - she stood before him-" Janson, is it too late, or can you save me? You love me. . . . I have never loved. It has been la danse, always. Often I have wanted love, it has called to me: I would not listen. But now, mon Dieu! I may never dance again! I knew the day might come, but I never thought it would come so soon. I want to live. He has made me suffer, the Brooke Haigg. . . . Yes, I tell you, perhaps because you love me as I did not know men loved. See-here I am-a little tired, I fear-but here I am if you would like me, mon ami. . . . Do as you will, take me away—where there are

sunshine and music and flowers. . . . Oh, I know I am talking like a sentimental, hysterical girl, but that is how I feel. The Brooke Haigg has cut all courage out of me: I think he tried to cut the heart out of me, too."

Janson did not move: "You love Haigg?"

"I do not know . . . . it is more like hatred. But I tell you this——" she stretched out her hands—"I want to hold him so—crush him, tear him! . . . It is not love: you in this country do not know what it is. I think it is what the old devil feels towards mankind. Yes, the devil, I think, in his way, loves men . . . but it's a love that consumes and turns to hatred. . . .

"Janson, if you love me, take me away. I am your friend, if you will; your lover, if you will; even your wife, if you wish—but, if I live, that might not be for long. Just take me. . . . I love you, too, in a way. I think I told you that before, but you did not understand. . . . Perhaps we might both understand, and learn something about—love—if we lay in the sunshine with the flowers and looked at the blue sky."

#### XXV

Janson took Faustine, well knowing what he was doing.

She loved him a little: that was enough. Had she loved him not at all, he would have resisted the temptation. For she came in the guise of a temptation. If he went with her he would have to sacrifice, for a time at any rate, his work—a mistress who had betrayed him. Now he could lay claim to no better title than that of quack, yet he experienced a fierce joy in the fight he waged against medical priestcraft. He had been accused of infamous conduct because, having rejected the current opinion of his profession on a matter of the greatest importance, and being silenced by boycott, he appealed directly to the public, and held up the mirror in which he had seen the face of Truth.

An unpardonable sin. He accepted his punishment and carried on his campaign. He knew he could not expect success, for the only cases that would come to him would be the hopeless ones,

those who had tried every treatment and found failure with all. Those whose health was as much broken by drugs as by disease, and those on whose bodies the crest and mottoes of surgery had already been carved.

He could have refused to treat the dying, who came to him crying "Save us." Haigg had accused him of being sentimental, and the accusation was just. Instead of playing the Priest he played the Samaritan, and the wounds that could never be healed he bound up, and the patients who could never pay him he gave his pence to—and so laid himself open to the accusation of bribery.

He was in the thick of the fight, that glorious, thankless, uphill fight which fools and martyrs never cease from waging, when Faustine threw herself into his arms.

A little love and one woman's life to be saved, against the lives of many women which might be prolonged? He did not consider the only thing men consider when a crisis occurs in their lives—how his action would affect his banking account and public opinion.

But he considered his friend, Haigg. So before giving Faustine an answer he called on the surgeon.

He told him exactly what had happened: the conversation between the two men took place in the same room where they had first discussed

Madame Noyada. Janson wondered if Haigg remembered: it was difficult to read his thoughts. His face still masked his emotions, if he possessed any, only the obstinacy of the stubborn chin was emphasised, and the steel-like quality of his eyes. Nevertheless he had changed slightly. Time had laid her fingers on him unawares. Janson saw that he, too, was fighting, and though he was opposed to him and the countless legions behind him, yet he loved him the more for the vigorous war he waged.

He sat at the bureau in his private room, dark save for the one shaded lamp by his side. Janson noticed a box of cigars, and that the room was heavy with tobacco smoke.

"Why have you come to tell me this?" Haigg asked, leaning back in his chair and keeping his face in the shadows. "Surely you don't want my advice."

"I wanted you to know what I was going to do. You saved Faustine's life——" He stopped, for he saw Haigg wince.

"Does she want it saved again? If she had obeyed me she would have been on the road to perfect health now. But she disobeyed me, and I knew what the result would be: tuberculosis."

Janson nodded. "Yes, that is what I fear. It sometimes does occur after . . . "

"Has anyone examined her?"

"I don't think so."

"You haven't?"

"No."

Haigg inhaled the smoke from his cigar and his features relaxed. "Yesterday I operated for tuberculosis.... the left lung.... successful." He waited for Janson to speak, but the latter held his tongue... "Well?"

Haigg was making Janson's task difficult. "Perhaps Madame Noyada feels as I do: and though danger threatens her again now, you preserved her from another and greater one—therefore she owes you—something."

Haigg shook his head. "I told Noyada that he could invest my fees in his restaurant in Soho. I have no doubt but that he will get fifty per cent. for his money."

Janson walked across the room to the bureau, and leaning over, looked at the surgeon. "Come, Haigg, can't we be frank—over this?"

"We have always been perfectly frank with one another. Our friendship has stood miraculous tests."

"This last test is the greatest, then. A woman."

Haigg laughed. "A woman—you speak as if there were only one woman in the world; haven't you discovered there are too many?"

"That is what I want to know, if there is only one woman in the world—as far as you and I are concerned?"

Haigg pushed his chair away from the bureau until the darkness surrounded him: until, in the midst of it, the end of his cigar glowed red, and the smoke rose in quivering lines. A silence ensued between the two men. Now and then the bureau creaked, for Janson's arms were trembling under the strain he imposed upon himself.

At last Haigg spoke. "I have dropped into the pernicious habit of reading poetry: sometimes it is the only thing that will send me to sleep. The other night I came across a poem bearing the name of our friend. Shall I quote you a line that my memory has stored?...

"' God said, Let him who wins her take, and keep, Faustine.'

"Curiously enough, she herself quoted it to me just before I found the poem."

The creaking of the bureau continued. Janson found the strain becoming unbearable: if Haigg had dropped his mask for an instant, he would have understood him. But his attitude incensed Janson. Every moment he found it more difficult to dissociate the man from his work, the friend from the high priest.

"I didn't come here to quote poetry. I came to tell you what happened at the theatre last night. Perhaps you have forgotten that you were the means of driving Faustine's husband away. He was no good, I know, but you

shouldn't have robbed her of him unless you meant to take his place."

"You're quite wrong. My excuse for frightening the little brute away is that I did not take his place."

"Apparently Faustine's savings were in his charge: he has taken them with him."

Haigg leant forward and lit another cigar, and the light flashed on his face for a moment. He had dropped the mask, and Janson saw his features: he was suffering. "What a strange anomaly it is that woman should be so greedy and so unbusinesslike. Faustine must make Noyada disgorge. Still, I suppose our united incomes for a year would not purchase her jewels. She won't starve, my friend."

Janson drew back. "I'd better go, Haigg. I think you will find Faustine will sell neither her jewels nor her——"

"Love? I never suggested it."

Janson walked to the door. Haigg stopped him. "Will you tell me if you're going to take Faustine away—for a rest-cure?"

"Yes, I am."

"Will you give her a message?"

Janson did not notice a change in the surgeon's voice. "Give her my sincere wishes for a speedy recovery. I ordered her abroad long ago. She disobeyed me: I am glad you have been able to persuade her."

"I haven't persuaded her. I've told you what happened last night."

"I understood she wished the end to come like that. She said she would die in harness rather than——" The remainder of his sentence was lost in a sneer.

"She was in our hands," Janson thundered.
"We used her——"

"I did," Haigg replied sharply.

"She was in our hands," Janson repeated.

"As soon as we had finished with her, we both let her go. You knew what you were doing. I didn't know. After what occurred between her and Noyada, I naturally thought that you—"

"Yes?"

"That you loved her. . . . Damn you."

Haigg rose; his short powerful figure vaguely outlined against the blackness. He stood motionless, a cigar between the fingers of his right hand, the smoke filtering through the gloom. He stood as if seeking something he would say.

And Janson waited too. But when only the silence answered him, he opened the door and went out. And, drawing his chair up to the bureau, Haigg sat down again. Then, taking the keys from his pocket, he unlocked a small drawer and drew from it a . . . . handkerchief.

The mask was from his face now. He fingered the fragile thing thoughtfully and then brought THE BUTCHER OF BRUTON STREET it close to his face until its perfume was in his nostrils.

The perfume of the flower. The only thing he could not dissect. Merely a scent—chemical composition. Similar to love . . . . when its secret is discovered.

#### XXVI

FAUSTINE insisted on fulfilling her engagement at the theatre until the end of the week. If Janson had understood her well enough to have locked her in her room and put the key in his pocket, she might have loved him more than a little.

In other things his love guided him aright. He worried her with no detail of the journey; he asked no questions, neither offered advice.

Not until the curtain had fallen on Saturday night did he tell her that the train which would carry them South, left Charing Cross the following Sunday morning at nine. Faustine made no comment: possibly she did not care what became of her. She had danced on this, the last night, as she had not danced for many weeks. She danced as she had danced when the Brooke Haigg sat alone in the stage box watching her. Though she did not know it, he was present on this occasion, standing at the back of the circle. Directly she came on the stage he found it difficult to realise that time had not stood still. Everything hap-

pened just as it had happened before. He saw Janson in the stalls and old Pill-Brown: and he was certain he could disinguish the Italian's voice amidst the uproar of applause.

Moreover, Faustine danced to him as she had done before, and the effect on his emotions was almost similar. But not altogether: he knew he had changed—but nevertheless he still denied it. He delighted in this weakness, mistaking it for strength.

When the dance was over and Faustine had taken her last call, he told himself he had seen her for the last time, and moved towards the exit—changed his mind, walking along the lounge, sat down at a little table and watched the saviours of the English Home as they paraded to and fro. Just so, he had sat with Janson. He felt Fate was playing tricks with him, but he did not care.

He was hardly surprised when a woman took the only vacant seat, and leaning her gloved arms on the table, whispered his name. The same woman who had reminded him previously that she had been one of the stepping stones on which he had mounted to success.

He looked at her critically, interested to see how greatly she had changed.

She offered no introduction now, but held one open hand towards him. "Give me a cigarette."

Mechanically he obeyed. He was glad to talk to anyone.

"So you are here again," she said, when she had touched with her lips the drink he ordered. "Let me see, I heard something about you not long ago. Didn't they make you a lord?... I wonder why all the beasts get all the plums in this life."

"Are you sure I am a beast?" It was a little interesting to be criticised by something beneath criticism.

The woman nodded. "Where's your pal, the man who was with you the last time I saw you? He hasn't been finding any of the plums in life's pudding, has he? He didn't look the sort, too free with his money."

"That's true," Haigg said slowly. "I don't think he has much, but he's going to throw it all away."

"Good luck to him. You stick to yours, don't you? you grab and hold fast to everything you can, eh?"

Haigg smoked with half-closed eyes as if not listening to what the woman said: his reply was addressed to himself rather than to her. "No, I let some things go."

A comic song from the stage, with orchestral effects, interrupted the conversation. When there was less noise the woman spoke again. "You are not so young as you were, are you? don't look so pleased with yourself either."

Haigg started, and frowning, looked at the

woman. "Do you see a change?" She nodded. "What is it?"

"Ask me another. . . . Fallen in love or got married, which?"

"And you," Haigg said grimly, "you haven't grown any younger. I suppose you're not thirty yet, are you? You won't be here much longer. People have paid me five pounds for that information!"

"You earn money easier than I do. Yes, I'm dying. . . . Funny, I was thinking about you last night, wondering if I could get you to cut me up again." She leaned right across the table, and her eyes grew troubled. "Say, couldn't you, for the sake of old times, patch me up a bit?"

"No."

The colour that flamed in the woman's cheeks was brighter than the rouge. "Yes, you could ... it would mean nothing to you, and I ... well, you know it isn't much fun to feel yourself dying. As you said, I am not thirty—and somehow I don't want to die all at once. You could patch me up. Why, I've heard of the wonderful things you've done. They say there's nothing you can't do."

No mask concealed Haigg's features now: they were brutal. "Don't you know they lie? Haven't you heard some of the other things that they say? My best friend calls me a butcher.

By God! he isn't so wrong. Do you want to be butchered?"

"I don't know what you mean. But you might help me. I'd pay, of course . . . can't pay much."

Haigg took off his hat and passed his hand across his forehead. "My good woman, I'm sick of the whole business. I'm as sick of my business as you are of yours. . . . What's the matter with you?"

"I paid a man five bob, not a month ago, to tell me one of them was nearly gone. The fool told me to travel, sea voyage or some tommy-rot. But you—you could do better than that. Do what you did before."

"It wasn't lung then."

"No, but that doesn't make any difference to you, does it?"

Haigg laughed. "No, not a bit, of course. The advance of surgery——" He checked himself. "Go away."

"You'll let me come and see you? Where do you live?"

Haigg gazed through her, looking into the future. . . . "One lung nearly gone . . . . the first operation may have been a fluke." He drew himself up, and the normal expression returned to his face. "You wish me to experiment on you?"

"Anything you like."

"Tell me where you live.—Oh, I shall remember: now go away."

The woman rose to her feet: "Thanks. You're not such a beast as I thought you were."

She disappeared, and Haigg remained seated at the table. He waited until the curtain fell on the last turn.

It was dawn before he went to bed, and he did not sleep until after sunrise, not until the hands of the clock pointed to five minutes past nine.

Marie had told him the hour her mistress was leaving London.

#### XXVII

As the train crawled across the black roofs of London the fog clouds parted for a moment and a gleam of sunshine flashed over the city. Faustine spoke no word during the journey to Dover. Janson had reserved a compartment, and she allowed him to wrap her in a big rug, her feet on the opposite seat, her head pillowed on a soft cushion.

Her face looked bloodless in the grey light of the April morning: she kept her eyes closed, but the long lashes were not alone responsible for the black shadows beneath them. Her lips were scarlet: they looked unnatural in contrast to the pallor of her face. She breathed so softly that no movement of her breast was visible, and she lay as motionless as if Death already held her in his arms.

Janson sat opposite her pretending to read a newspaper: but he watched. When the train lurched he cursed under his breath. At Dover he waited, keeping the door shut until the crowd had fought its way to the boat.

Faustine never moved nor asked questions, nor even opened her eyes. But when he touched her arm she rose mechanically.

He lifted her on to the platform, and then, stooping, picked her up in his arms as if she were a child. She smiled, and made a pretence of struggling.

"Mon ami, this is ridiculous. . . . Your arm is sufficient; I can walk quite well. . . . They will laugh at me; they will think I am an invalid."

Janson carried her along the pier, across the gangway into her cabin. He laid her on the sofa there, wrapped her up, and left her with Marie.

But he stood outside the cabin door until the steamer lurched into Calais harbour. Again he waited until the gangways were clear, and a free passage for Faustine to the train. Again he carried her, and she made no pretence of resisting now: moreover, only the English travellers smiled; the French porters and gendarmes, and the innumerable uniformed officials, were sympathetic. The process of eradicating the natural good breeding of the Frenchman is a long one.

Before the train started Janson fed Faustine with a jelly he had prepared, and then, with Marie, he tucked her into bed in the wagon lit, as the train started on its long journey in pursuit of the sun.

"Can you sleep in the train?"

"I think I could sleep anywhere just now,"

she whispered. . . . "I am sorry to be so stupid, Janson . . . perhaps by and by I shall wake —and amuse you."

"I prefer to amuse myself—by watching you sleep."

For an hour she tossed restlessly to and fro: then she dozed, though Janson knew she was conscious. Before Paris was reached he fed her again, then gave her a sleeping draught, and, leaving her, he played with a little déjeuner in the restaurant car. Marie sat opposite him: neither the boat nor the train affected her appetite. Her eyes sparkled, her face was wreathed in smiles—for she was at home again, and the music of her own language sounded in her ears, and the good red wine swirled in her glass.

When Janson looked at Faustine again she was really asleep: her face was no longer white, splashes of red were on either cheek. The atmosphere of the compartment was stifling: he opened the window, and hung the rug across the bed to shield her from the draught. He returned to his own compartment, dozing and reading until dinner was served. At nine o'clock he told Marie to rest.

He sat in the wagon lit beside Faustine's bed on the seat by the window, and let the wind blow on his face, and watched the stars appear. The grey clouds of England had been left behind. He saw through the darkness the fair French

land rolling away towards the distant hills: trees stood sentinel here and there, sometimes long lines of poplars blackened the sky.

The air was frosty and cold: the stars were bright. They were like eyes blinking ceaselessly, the eyes of an army of worlds that guarded the universe, wherein Life, the goddess, was hidden. Watching them, peace came to Janson. Watching them, he saw their battalions grow in number; not thousands, but millions; not millions, but quadrillions. Innumerable, yet his soul was conscious of each one.

They were uplifting and strengthening, those eyes of unknown worlds, guardians of the Kingdom of Life. Janson no longer doubted whether he were doing wisely. He knew that the woman sleeping where his left hand lay was worth saving: he thought not of his love but of her life. Though she had done no more than dance in the little dancing world they inhabited, yet their world helped to swell the countless battalions of worlds he saw dancing through the universe, and she was as necessary to it, as it was to the cosmos. For it had been vouchsafed to him to look for an instant into her soul, and he had seen there the foundations of a city waiting for the builder.

The wind blew sharply and the cold increased, but Janson felt neither: he was hardly conscious of the swaying of the train as it shrieked, a mere

dusty atom on his dusty planet towards the South. The stars were telling him their secrets: unconsciously he was annihilating space, until it was vouchsafed to him to see the gates of the city which death has never entered.

And so through the long night he waited and watched: dreaming, perhaps, or perhaps more wide awake and more fully alive than ever he had been before.

Once, an hour or so before dawn, Faustine stirred, and some broken words fell from her lips. He bent over her and she opened her eyes.

"Who is it?" she whispered.

"Janson. Don't wake yet."

"I'm thirsty."

He gave her food and drink, holding her in his arms. She laughed when she had finished. "I shall wake presently—this is the maddest dream I have ever dreamed. . . . Why are you here, Janson? . . . I am a fraud, aren't I? I shall be all right presently."

"You're all right now."

He laid her on the pillows again, and, taking both her hands, commenced to stroke them until she fell asleep again.

"They bungled when they made you a man," she whispered drowsily. "You ought to have been . . . . let me think now . . . . I saw what you ought to have been when I was asleep. . . ."

Holding her hands, he, too, nodded; for the day and the night had been long, and he had not seen bed since Friday.

When he awoke the wind no longer whistled and the stars were hidden. The air that blew through the window was warm, and above the turquoise sea the sun was striding across heaven. He pulled down the rug, leaned out, and hailed the morning.

"Mon Dieu /-what is it?"

"The sun, Faustine. Look, God's in His heaven, all's right with the world."

"Oh!"

He helped her rise, and supported her whilst she leaned towards the window. Dusty olive trees were waving their arms at the passing train, a strange, crude green against that turquoise sea quivering silently beneath the burning sun. Baby waves put up their lips to receive its kisses; the waters of the tideless sea lapped brown rocks, or softly sighed when they reached the yellow sands. From the shore a boat drifted, one white sail set like a bird's wing.

Faustine's breath came quickly: she opened her arms, trying to lean out of the window.

Suddenly a tunnel blotted the blue and gold, and darkness covered them. Janson felt Faustine's hair blown by the wind across his face.

Light came again with a crash: the scene had changed. The warm air was heavy with the

scent of flowers, down a sheltered corner of the mountain violets tumbled: Nature threw a handful almost into the carriage window. Bushes of yellow mimosa took the place of olive trees.

... Orchards of orange blossoms and round yellow balls gleamed in the sunbeams: again a vision of sea, its scent mingling with that of the mimosa. The colours commenced to riot together; perfumes united to make the senses reel, and save for the weary rattle of the train, there was a grateful silence.

Faustine slipped back. "Janson, you will save me?... you will make me well and strong and beautiful again? You can ... you will?"

"Yes, I will save you." Almost roughly he unclasped her arms and freed himself. "You have slept long enough; you had better get up now."

He found Marie and sent her to Faustine. His vigil had weakened him: his strength had gone out to Faustine, and he dared not remain with her longer. For it was not love that mattered now, it was life.

#### XXVIII

Janson arranged that they should stay one or two nights at Monte Carlo, and so break the journey between France and Italy. The little town, which has been hysterically called both heaven and hell—but for those who have eyes to see and ears to hear is nothing more or less than purgatory—lay basking in the sun.

Monte Carlo always sleeps through the early spring, blinking her eyes at the sea. She is silent, sphinx-like. Only two sounds disturb her slumbers, both suggestive of destruction — the bark of guns on the sea-shore, and the whisper of gold in the Casino.

Janson took Faustine just above purgatory. The hotel was built like an eagle's nest on the mountain side, clinging to the rocks, with countless eyes ever watching the sun rise and set on waters always blue. It did seem as if her resting-place were midway between heaven and hell. Balconies enclosed both Faustine's rooms, and roses climbed from green pots around the pillars. The only

sound was the music of water as it sprang from a hidden well in the rocks below. Almond trees glistened white in the sunshine: here and there rose-bushes—blots of red and white; and where the mountains were kind, green arms of vines running across the brown earth.

Far below the gardens, almost hidden, the Casino: her white walls shone pleasantly, and from this eagle's nest in the rock she, too, seemed to doze, giving no hint of the turmoil that raged within.

Janson had arranged Faustine's sitting-room for comfort, not for luxury. The wall-paper and the hangings were pale green; everything that was ugly had been banished. There were no pictures, but flowers everywhere, lying loosely in glass bowls and vases as if they had been thrown there by nature, not by man. The carpet was purple, and the chairs covered with white and purple chintz. There was a bust of Venus de Milo, a book-case containing English and French authors—fiction, philosophy, and poetry.

When Faustine entered the room she looked at everything critically, as if uncertain whether she approved, and at last she turned to Janson and nodded.

"The Brooke Haigg could not have done this," she whispered under her breath. "Where did you learn?"

Without replying he led her to the bedroom: here the walls were pale blue, the carpet seagreen, and the woodwork white; white rugs like snow-drifts on either side of the bed, and before the dressing table; only one sofa, two chairs, but many flowers, and again many books.

"Mon ami," Faustine said softly, "you yourself have arranged for all this; is it not so?... Thank you."

A large bathroom adjoined—shining marble. Marie was busy unpacking, and Janson made Faustine lie on the lounge sofa at the foot of the bed.

"You had better remain here to-day and rest." Faustine shook her head. "I am going to try and do what you tell me—always. But you must humour me sometimes. Now I want to plunge into the bath and wash away the journey from London. And then we will sit on the balcony in the other room and look at the sun until he sets, and smell the flowers. And you, you will feel free to amuse yourself, won't you?"

He nodded. "You are my-amusement."

Faustine raised her eyes to his: he looked away. "I will try," she said. Marie had finished, and Janson made no reply. Faustine did not understand: how should she? Janson did not explain the decision he had come to with his soul during the rush through the night from Paris to Monte Carlo.

When she had bathed and dressed he found her lying on the balcony, her lap full of flowers, an unopened book by her side, and Marie sitting at her feet chattering. The colour had left Faustine's cheeks and she was pale again; her hands were cool and there was peace in her eyes, though whenever she looked at him he saw expectation . . . nothing else, unless perhaps a tinge of curiosity.

He left her alone, though she asked him not to go; he knew he was no longer necessary: for twenty-four hours he had been continually by her side.

When he returned at sunset he found the windows closed and Faustine sitting at the table scribbling. The room was heavy with moist heat.

He braced himself for a fight, and sending Marie for a wrap, opened the windows wide.

"Mon Dieu! are you mad? I shall die of cold." Faustine shivered.

"I am going to kill or cure you with fresh air. It is no use talking. You will sleep with your windows wide open——"

"I will not."

Faustine shrugged her shoulders. She threw down her pen and sat at the table shivering and coughing. Janson took no notice.

"I believe you want to kill me. . . . You are jealous of Brooke Haigg. . . . I hate you, and I won't have anything to do with you, do you

hear! Because I offered you everything, this is what you do to me. Oh, you English!"

She waited for Janson to capitulate or apologise. He did neither—he rang for dinner. Faustine stormed under her breath, but Janson only understood part of what she said, for she did not find the English language sufficiently expressive. At last she rose and closed the windows.

Janson waited until the table was laid and the servant left the room. Then quietly, without a word, he reopened them. Night had arrived suddenly: the wind from the sea was cold but sweet: the stars were again looking at Janson... they quivered as if they were laughing. He turned his back on them and faced Faustine, and in a voice as calm as the voice she had heard Brooke Haigg use, with something, too, of his steel-like quality, he talked to her as to an unruly child.

She was trembling with rage, and an unnatural flush returned to either cheek: he dared pit his strength against hers! He was behaving now as Haigg would have behaved—and it was not fair. She did not want to fight: she was too ill. The bargain between them had been to give her strength, to give her life, that she might conquer the surgeon. To fight with him was quite a different thing, a joy she promised herself in the future, a gamble with life—if she lived.

But Janson was killing her. She told him so again.

"Shut those windows or I will go away. . . . I will leave you and have nothing to do with you."

His strength infuriated her. That he dared resist was amazing.

"Canaille! Beast!" She flung the words at him, and entering her bedroom, locked the door. Dinner was announced, but she refused to come: yet she was very hungry, and Janson had no appetite. She had seen the menu: it was a gastronomic cameo designed by Janson and executed by the best cook in Europe. Faustine relented when she thought of the trouble Janson had taken to give her both health and pleasure. She lay on the bed listening, expecting his knock at the door, apologies . . . explanations; kisses if he wished, and were very good.

But he did not come, and she hardened her heart. Instead, Marie with a tray, white cloth, and flowers. She ate the meal in sulky solitude. The windows were tightly closed, the curtains drawn and the room heated. She began to feel suffocated: her hands and face burned.

She was ill. She knew she would die. And no one cared. She rose and struggled to the mirror: the dressing table danced to and fro. Had she grown so ugly, then, she asked herself? had she faded so quickly that the beauty she had boasted could no longer control men?

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She sat down, and leaning her face on the dressing table, cried.

Marie put her to bed, and Faustine refused to be comforted. After she had dismissed her maid she recalled her to ask, and with exaggerated carelessness, what Monsieur Janson was doing.

"He is sitting at the open window in the next room, reading a book."

Faustine extinguished all the lights, save one burning over the bed, turned on her side, and pretended to sleep, but the heat encompassed her like a steaming blanket. Once she lost consciousness, but it was a faint, not sleep.

At last she could bear it no longer: she threw the clothes back, with an effort raised herself, and called Janson. He came at once: the room was almost in darkness, the light from the other room silhouetted Faustine. He saw the flushed face, the white arms bare to the elbow.

"What do you want?"

Ill as she felt, she could have struck him, but her strength failed.

"Nothing," she whispered, throwing herself back on the pillow. "Go away!"

First he covered her up, removing the rug she had thrown across the bed: walked to the windows and opened them: arranged the curtain so that it shielded her. He turned the handle of the radiator and reduced the heat fifty per cent. Then he left the room.

She waited, holding her breath, very angry but also a little frightened, fearing lest he did not intend to return. But he came back, and telling her to sit up, gave her something to drink.

She intended to refuse, but obeyed.

"You are killing me," she coughed.

"You are killing yourself."

"You do not love me. I am glad, because I hate you now. But nothing matters. Though you deceived me and are breaking your promise, I am ready to keep mine. Do what you will with me: I do not care. It is the Brooke Haigg I love, and you know it and are jealous, so you are going to rob me of my life, like a coward."

Whilst she spoke she kept her eyes on his face, gradually pushing the clothes away until her arms were free. Watching, she saw that he was feeling her power. He had been merciless, she would be merciless. She raised herself a little, her hand touching his. He started, and her lips parted as she moistened them. For a moment the man fought the physician. Love proving stronger than passion, the physician conquered.

"Janson," she whispered, "shut the windows.
. . . I don't really hate you. . . . When I said
I loved you a little it was true. And you love
me, don't you?"

"Lie down." She quivered. He had spoken as if to a dog. She was too tired to fight any longer, yet to her it was a shame that he, Janson,

should have withstood her so long. She opened both her arms, wide, as if she would fold him in them and drag him down among the dancing shadows to the white pillows.

But he stood immovable, waiting to be obeyed. And with a little cry she lay down, turned on her side, and hid her face.

Then Janson sat down, switched on the light of the reading-lamp, and, taking a volume from the bookcase, commenced to read aloud.

Faustine sighed softly . . . . perhaps he did not hear. Well, she could do no more. She did not understand what he wanted. Surely now he knew he had his will of her: and yet he read a stupid French novel in a voice as calm as the voice of the distant sea: he read with a dreadful British accent.

Whilst she showed that she was awake he continued to read, so she pretended to fall asleep. At last he ceased: she heard him switch out the light.

He bent over her; she lay motionless . . . . waiting. Something just touched her hair—his hands? . . . . his lips.

She waited . . . then, hearing only the silence and feeling a sense of loneliness, she opened her eyes—turned round—switched on the lights.

Janson had gone. Even then Faustine did not quite understand. But she was glad, because 276

she was so tired. Moreover, he had kissed her hair, so she knew that he was still her prisoner, not she his.

And as for those silly windows? . . . . Well . . . . She fell asleep before she could decide whether it were best to be killed by fresh air or by foul.

#### XXXX

FAUSTINE sat in the sunshine: above her, blue sky; at her feet, blue sea. But there was no sunshine in her eyes, nor laughter on her lips, though the perfumed South laughed softly, rioting in the hot spring-time.

Faustine sulked. For a whole week she had sulked, on the second day confessing as much to Janson. She hoped he would be angry and retaliate. Unfortunately, he was sympathetic: made excuses when she grumbled; forgave her when she told him he bored her.

The open window Faustine had to accept: she swore she would die, and secretly respected Janson for, apparently, killing rather than humouring her. He was too kind, and the only thing she really appreciated was this one brutality.

She was, at first, quite willing to sit out of doors all day, or to go for long drives through groves of orange and lemon trees, past terraces where flowers rioted, splashing blue sea and sky

with crude green, brilliant gold, noisy scarlet, or tender pink and purple. Generally Janson accompanied her; his almost childish appreciation of this Southern fairyland of warmth and colour amused her, but she found herself unable to respond to his enthusiasm.

After the first day or two the cloudless sky, the burning sun, the perfumed air, and the flowers and fruit everywhere, became repellent. She awoke to search the horizon for a cloud; she yearned for a storm to whip the lazy waters to fury, change their colour and blacken the tiresome turquoise sky.

She even marvelled that she had ever tolerated, much less loved, a land that looked like a gaudy picture post-card coloured by a child with a paint-box of crude colours: that smelt like the interior of the marquee of an English horticultural exhibition, and was as enervating and depressing as the heating-room of a Turkish bath.

At first she hid these feelings from Janson, but one day she burst into a torrent of abuse of the country, the weather—and the stupid people who derived satisfaction from being suffocated by day and frozen by night.

The outburst ended in tears.

Janson refrained from attempting to comfort her; he was slowly learning lessons in tact. Moreover, he had noticed, though only through the eyes of the medicine man, that Faustine

looked no better for the change: it was not boredom he saw in her eyes, rather ill-health. And so he found excuses for her. He had none, however, for himself.

A few evenings after her outbreak Faustine apologised: she laid some of the blame for her bad temper at his door, though he had already taken upon himself the whole burden.

He had, Faustine declared, taken her away from London under false pretences! Not that she wanted his love, really; but she had followed him expecting it, prepared for it.

Indeed, it was the only love she would ever know! And he withheld it, treating her as brutally as Haigg, and as coldly. Treating her merely as a patient: always reminding her she was an invalid—and he her doctor.

Janson listened to what she had to say in silence; a little puzzled. He had, ever since the night of their arrival at Monte Carlo, fought resolutely with his love, holding it in check, trying to deny its existence. His passion was too strong to be played with. He would have her everything to him, or nothing: be her lover absolutely, or else no more than her medical attendant.

That he had chosen the latter position as the more worthy, or the more blessed, was, of course, incomprehensible to Faustine. That Janson, or any other man, might sacrifice her on love's

altar was natural: that he should sacrifice himself, when no sacrifice was asked, was beyond her powers of comprehension.

Janson's resistance incensed and wounded her: she felt unequal to the contest, yet determined to conquer him. The easiest way was to wait and allow Nature and the warm, luxurious South to aid her. But time proving a poor ally, she was kind and cruel by turn: then hid herself from him as much as possible, grew morose, and refused to struggle against the depression and inertia which increased daily.

"If you brought me here to kill me, you ought to do it kindly, mon ami; with a knife, quickly. But since you can give me neither love nor death, I shall go home, to London and Brooke Haigg!"

They had just returned from what Faustine called the everlasting dull drive along the little white road, and were sitting on the balcony overlooking Monte Carlo's palm trees, white Casino, and turquoise sea. The garçon had just brought tea: Faustine sipped it, then pushed it aside and lit a cigarette.

"That is your second to-day. I agreed to only one."

Faustine shrugged her shoulders. "It is too late. I tell you I am going home. I am dying quicker here than I should in London. Look at me!"—she spread out her arms—"I'm more like

a rat than a woman, now! I counted my ribs this morning . . . . I fancied I heard them rattling in the coffin-box. Ugh!"

She saw Janson's face change colour; she had hurt him, and so she smiled. It seemed so long since she had been able to hurt anyone. "You'll be sorry when I am dead, eh? You'll wish you had been more lover-like—and more tender. The kisses of the dead are bitter, my Janson; the embraces of the living are best."

"I shall ask for neither," Janson replied quietly, avoiding Faustine's eyes and looking away over the Casino.

Faustine crushed the cigarette between her fingers, then tossed it across the balcony. "And you said you loved me! No matter—I go home to-morrow."

Janson smiled, not knowing how his smile whipped Faustine's rage. "When you were in London you called the South your home: now, it is the land of fog! You don't know what you want. Won't you be patient—"

"Patient!" She threw the word in his face. "Mon Dieu! have I not been patient, sitting in the glare of the sun, and blinding my eyes with the awful blue, day after day! I tell you it is driving me mad. And am I any better? Look at me! I—I am almost ugly."

He looked at her then, and she held his eyes captive. "You are more beautiful. I should

not have thought it possible a few months ago; but it is so."

The storm left Faustine's face. "You shouldn't try to pay compliments—yours are too heavy for poor truth to bear. But if you find me so beautiful, why have you neglected me, Janson?"

"I don't understand: explain!"

Faustine shrugged her shoulders. It was an explanation she wanted from Janson. She wanted to break the deadly monotony of the last few days. Something must happen—exactly what, she was almost past caring. She had expected love; now death threatened, whilst Janson quietly waited, chasing, as it were, the chimera Life with a butterfly-net.

Faustine lit another cigarette and puffed a cloud of smoke in Janson's face. "That is my explanation."

"Throw that thing away."

"Too late! You have had your week. I have been yours to do with as you pleased, and what have you done? You sit there, a lump of animated English clay, and bark the word explain at me! It is for you to explain what you have done with this week I gave you. Oh! you've been virtuous, I know. You have been kind, until I wanted to hit you! You have been wise until I prayed the Virgin for a fool, and longed to wake up and find myself in that beastly little

bed in the Brooke Haigg's abattoir in Bruton Street. You brought me here pretending it was love you would give me, and you have only given me advice—and a draughty bedroom."

Janson rose from his seat and leaned over the balcony. Faustine watched him impatiently: she could only see his back now; it irritated her. It was expressive of determination: it was the back of a man who is fighting against large odds, sees an opportunity of pleasant capitulation, but prefers to continue the unequal fight.

"Fool!" Faustine whispered.

"For goodness' sake say something!" she cried at last. Her nerves were as useless as the babyribbon on her linen: when the latter frayed she could change it; the former were quite worn out, and no one could replace them.

"It's not easy to speak now," Janson said; "and as for explaining—why, that's impossible."

She yawned, and then shivered. "You sound like a clergyman giving his text. Nothing is impossible, Janson—except you yourself. You're the most impossible man I've ever met. It is you who are killing me, not my silly little cough; I can't bear it any longer . . . . that's why I'm going back to London."

He turned quickly. "Tell me, what is it you cannot bear any longer?"

"The boredom of this life; the monotony; the tiresome view from this window, the tiresome

drive along the white roads—which lead nowhere. And——"

"Yes, go on."

Faustine was almost crying: her voice was no longer harsh.

"Oh, don't you know how tiresome you are? I'm an ungrateful beast; yes, I should be thrashed, and if you would thrash me I should understand and like you better. But you've done nothing, Janson, except to see I get up in the morning, feed me and drive me here or there, and then send me to bed like a little child. Do you think I allowed you to run away with me for that? And when you first promised to take me, you intended to be something more than a-what shall I call it?—tame companion-physician! . . . Mais enfin! you have shamed me into telling you that I wanted what I couldn't give-love. Before I died I wanted to taste the fruit from the best tree—because it was forbidden, n'est ce pas? Oh, it's too late now, mon cher! love is not to be begged or bought—by Faustine. No, not even from Brooke Haigg. you, had I been strong again, had danced, too soon, this death into my breast, I would have brought Haigg to my feet, and for me he would have sacrificed everything he now holds dear. I would have turned the butcher into the lover—perhaps into the husband and the father; for who knows what is hidden

in my heart—though I am only Faustine the dancer?"

Janson took Faustine in his arms; his face was pressed close to her hair, which still held its perfume. And the sun, reddening Monaco, as it dipped into the Mediterranean, gave life again to the golden serpents he had sometimes seen coiled there.

"Faustine—I love you——"

She closed her eyes, and, turning her face away, rested her head on the cushions. "I have heard it said so in every language; and I have always laughed. When last I heard you say it, I did not laugh; but now . . . . alas! I am too tired even to laugh. . . . Isn't it time for my medicine, doctor?"

"Listen to me." The restraint in Janson's voice roused Faustine's curiosity; she opened her eyes and glanced at him. "Listen to me, and laugh afterwards as much as you please. I know love—and hate—are used as men use bread and water, fruit and wine: we treat the beggar dying of starvation in the gutter with the same contempt we give the lover dying, probably of influenza, beneath his mistress's chamber window. But when I say I love you, I do not mean with the love that kills. You're going to live, Faustine! and that "—he rose to his feet and moved away . . . . "and that is why I remain your tame companion-physician."

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She shook her head. "It sounds like a fairy story. I don't quite understand; but you are wrong in one thing, Janson. I am going to die—not of love, though!"

Her lips trembled a little; she closed her eyes again, keeping them shut tightly, afraid lest tears forced a passage. She might have spared herself; for they conquered and ran down her cheeks.

"You see how weak I've grown," she whispered as she felt Janson's arms about her again. "I wish I were dead. . . . I'm only an animated corpse, with all the drawbacks of life and none of the advantages of death. See what a beast I've been to you: Haigg would have dug a knife into me . . . . Noyada beaten me—but you just smile, and cry Courage! and I think that's what hurts."

"Nonsense . . . . it's my business to smile and cry Courage—and all that sort of thing, and when you're yourself again to send you back to London. D'you understand? All you require is courage——"

"And it's gone. I wake up in the middle of the night and find myself trembling all over . . . . and everything seems to be sinking away, and I know then that I'm dying, and my foolish boast comes back to jeer. I want to cry out to you to come to me—the loneliness is terrible. I hide myself under the bedclothes until the terror goes,

and then I sleep perhaps. . . . If you were there I shouldn't be frightened, Janson. . . . I should be happy. And Brooke Haigg—I do not think of him—not much. I shall not see him again. . . . Or, if I do?—would not a friend, who refused friendship because he already once possessed a comrade, be thought unreasonable? And may not a widow marry once—twice—thrice? If I live and conquer Brooke Haigg, I shall send you out from my life, and be widowed! It is not death that makes a widow-no, nor her indecent black clothes advertising grief and 'Premises to let'; it is the empty heart. Though I do not love you much—as I told you . . . . yet I feel towards you as I have felt towards no other man. I sometimes feel a child again, with a child's dreams. . . . Kiss me, Janson."

He kissed her . . . .

Then he rose and went out quickly. Faustine sighed; her cheeks took the colour from the sunset, her eyes sparkled like the sea beneath the Casino. Slowly she closed her eyes; breathed softly; slept.

#### XXX

Why Janson should have refused the gifts the gods—and Faustine—cast at his feet is a problem for students of psychology.

Perhaps he himself could not have satisfactorily explained the causes that moved him to reject that which he desired.

Faustine was his, he knew, if he but chose to take her. But that he might not keep her, he knew also.

So rather than a part, he rejected the whole. The cost he did not reckon at the time; there were days when he felt almost content with his position. Certain it was he had seldom been so happy. He became a youth again, with youth's enthusiasm, its hope, its faith, its blindness, and, above all, its power of enjoyment.

To be with Faustine was sufficient; for the privilege of service he praised God. Sometimes at night, after he had left her asleep in her room, he would sit at his window and look over the white hotels and villas of Monte Carlo,

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silent and still, and marvel at the magic love had worked. It had changed the face of his world. Dreams he had long forgotten, returned to him: no longer in the guise of dreams, but as reality. . . .

The great sentry-palms, and the peep of turquoise between, meeting the sky whose million eyes no longer hid their secrets; and the white almond blossom falling down the red rocks; and at his hands masses of roses throwing perfume like kisses on his lips—he had seen all before, years ago, when he lay on his back in a Devonshire orchard and watched white clouds chase

Then, also, had he seen Faustine leaning down, peering at him through the green foliage; he had loved then, and his love had borne fruit, even as the apple trees—pale bud and delicate blossom, and afterwards red fruit, sweet and forbidden. . . .

across a pale sky.

But he had plucked the goddess from the leafy bower and made her his . . . and the dream had given birth to other and more wonderful dreams. The orchard became alive with the laughter of children, and the soft sound of their feet passing over the grasses. . . . His children and hers——

Dreams. Yet, here was the woman; she, whose face he had seen as a youth between the apple boughs. He recognised it now . . . and there were other things he remembered.

London awoke him from that first dream, rubbed the woman's face from memory's mirror: would London awake him from this second dream which seemed so real? After thirty, men do not dream, unless they are artists, or other curious beings outside the two-inch radius of hustled existence.

At first he asked himself the question impatiently; in time he ceased to worry. This last dream he had dreamed with Faustine would not be rubbed from memory's mirror: it was a dream he would lay with life in the womb of the earth when his days were numbered, that the earth might conceive and bear their dream-children—his and Faustine's.

Love is truly a madness, for what sane man—as we measure sanity—would willingly breed his kind, knowing the history of his species; knowing no son of man escapes the agony and bloody sweat; knowing each son of his flesh will kill the son of a brother across the sea, will destroy and murder if he be lusty, steal and starve if he be greedy; and if weak be ground beneath the heel of the strong; knowing each daughter is bred to crucify love and conceive in pain and shame, to rob her sister lest her sister rob her, and to grow old, seeing only the bitterness of life—an instrument Nature has used and flung aside?

The madness of love—it is well strong men laugh at it, save under another name. But call it

by what name they may, they cannot escape it: disguised, degraded, robbed of its beauty and delight, it is stronger than mankind, and ruthlessly crushes the fools who, century after century, try to crush it.

A madness, verily: but is it not man himself, probably in guise of priest, who, through his unmentionable barbarities, sent poor Love mad in ages past, and now is forced to keep him in chains, confined to the padded room of the wedding chamber—in darkness, with a crust of bread and water for his food?

Mad or sane—Janson sometimes wondered under which classification he came. Faustine assured him he was mad, and of course she should have known. Of a surety Marie knew the Englishman had lost his brains—if indeed Englishmen ever possessed any. Here was love among the roses—and he only picked the roses! A pleasant man to look upon, too: even handsome since the sun had tanned his cheeks. But if the choice lay with her, she knew whom she would have chosen: he who had nearly robbed her mistress of life—the man of steel—the brute-man!

Faustine changed her mind, and did not return to London. Instead Janson took her to the opera, and afterwards allowed her to walk through the Rooms and throw two hundred francs away on the tables. Afterwards supper at Re's!

It was an experiment: a dangerous one, but a fortnight of absolute rest in the South had robbed Faustine of vitality instead of giving it her.

"I must do something," was her constant cry. "I am tired and peevish, because I am bored. Silence—ugh! it's like a rope around my throat choking me. Driving to cap this, and cap that! Ma foi, I'm a woman, not a mechanical toy out of order."

She enjoyed seeing Janson suffer: she hurt him at intervals, to assure herself that his love was ever at white-heat.

"I must find life somewhere, receive it from someone. Your rest-and-peace cure is wrong, mon ami. Every hour of peace is an hour off my life. Take me where people are—where music is! You shall see a difference, I promise. But soon it will be too late. . . . I shall be too rested to care. I shall just go off, pouff, so!"

The experiment was immediately successful. Janson had believed Nature a better physician than he, and fresh air more potent than drugs or knives. Now his belief received a shock. The unnatural proved potent medicine, with power to heal where Nature and he both failed; foul air succeeded where fresh air failed; excitement brought roses to Faustine's cheeks, which the Southern sun had failed to redden.

Janson watched, said nothing. He knew the symptoms: they were but warnings——

But now, with each passing day her spirits rose: she laughed sometimes, and sometimes sang. She was willing to sleep through the heat of the day—if she were allowed dinner at Ciro's on the terrace, the theatre, the ball, or an hour in the Rooms afterwards. She ceased from teasing Janson, and instead grew kind; thoughtful sometimes for his pleasure, as if not realising he desired nothing further than to serve—and to save.

"I wonder why you fight so for my miserable body's salvation, since you reject what little pleasure it might have given you. If you were a priest you could not have fought more fiercely over my soul," Faustine said to him one day. "Indeed, a priest would have given up long ago."

"Instinct, I suppose," Janson replied shortly. No one likes to admit he harbours a lunatic in his heart.

A week, and Faustine had exhausted the healing powers of the unnatural.

"Take me away," she cried one morning; "I feel like a corpse again."

And suddenly she looked like one. Janson had expected the reaction. Since she had been allowed her own way, her health had improved most marvellously. Janson expected temperature. Instead it fell to normal; bad symptoms gave place to good. He dared not admit hope—waited instead for the inevitable change.

And it came, when she cried to him like a child

to take her away. He did not ask where. He did not delay an hour; he bade Marie be packed before midday; and when the maid held up her hands in horror and cried, "Impossible, monsieur!" he took off his coat and filled one of Faustine's trunks himself.

Such a trunk, and such clothes! He started at lightning speed, with gallant determination; but the pace quickly slackened. It seemed sacrilege to treat those feminine toys roughly; each delicate garment, each shining piece of fabric, was a part and portion of the woman he loved. He found himself trembling at the touch of a nameless scrap of scented lace or perfumed ribbon. As mad as Love himself, he buried his face in this shapeless little garment, or pressed his lips to a glove—one she had never worn, or Marie would have claimed it; but being man, how was he to know?

"Oh! oh!" Marie cried, staring at Janson's handiwork, "if madame sees what you have done——"

"She won't see. Come, sit on this trunk whilst I lock it."

The maid obeyed, and before two o'clock Faustine had crossed the frontier, and a motor-car was carrying her through Italy, away from the coast and the tiresome blue sea to the mountains and the shade of the green olives.

The motor toiled from the valley, snorted and 295

trembled as the ascent increased. But a cool breeze welcomed them; olive trees swept down in battalions; scarlet geraniums blazed across ruined white walls; scents and sounds of the mountains met them instead of the scents and sounds of the seas.

"Open your eyes, Faustine," Janson whispered. "Look! here is another world, cool and green. Breathe deeply of the soft hill-winds."

Her lips parted, and she looked, not at the smiling country, but at Janson. "You are too good to me."

He feigned to laugh. "Look at the good country—your country, Faustine."

She shook her head. "A thousand years ago—not now, I have no country. . . . I've been a wanderer always, Janson, and alone. . . . Lift me higher, and hold me closer—so! Yes, the wind is sweet, and the hills comforting. . . . I've always hated the sea—so like myself—dancing with diamonds on its breast when the sun shines, but at cloud-time shrieking with a storm; greedy and restless too—eh, carissimo?"

She had never addressed him so before; he leant back, but she drew his face down. "You needn't be afraid of me now, bambino—for that is all you are, a big English bambino! I will not try again to rob you of that precious toy honour you value above love, nor stain the friendship your friend has shattered already."

"I'm not afraid of you, Faustine."

She laughed, softly: as faintly as the wind through the cypress tree. "Yes, you are, for you love me: not quite in the way I understood love, but it is not a bad way either. I think it was the way I dreamed when I was young—and a bride! That is why Sigismund received only the knife from me."

"Don't talk, dear, just rest."

It was the first time he had used an endearing word to her. As if grateful at the receipt of something long deferred, the colour came to her cheeks.

How would Brooke Haigg say it? At the self-asked question she grew cold. She could not conjure the surgeon's voice tuned to dear.

My darling! No, it was not pretty: it reeked of the footlights of a theatre where British farce is played. Haigg would never descend to dear or darling. Yet when Janson had spoken the former word it had not sounded banal. Perhaps it was not the fault of the language, but of the people, that Love is tongueless in the island where she had left her heart. Here in Italy . . . . every other word was a caress. She had promised to teach Haigg Italian—as she had promised herself to teach him love.

Neither lesson would be learned now. She had said a moment ago that she had always been a traveller journeying through life alone. The journey was near its end. . . . Here indeed she

climbed the last hill—towards the heavens? Janson was reading her thoughts. She felt the pressure of his hand.

"What is worrying?"

"The Butcher—of Bruton Street," she smiled.

"Cannot you forget him?"

"No, Janson; I'm sorry—dear." She stumbled over the last word, helping to give it beauty by giving it two syllables. "Perhaps it is not love after all I feel for him: only the desire to conquer. He is the first man I have not conquered without a fight. . . . Shall I live to fight him?"

"That is why I am here." His voice was harsh.

Faustine fell to dreaming, and her head rested against Janson's shoulder. He was not to know she was longing to hear him say dear to her again. The British love-word had started a new train of thought.

The desire to live for the sake of Life, not solely for the sake of the Butcher of Life!—a strange desire coming at a strange moment.

The journey into the mountains was finished with Faustine sleeping.

The inn was rough and the food indifferent, but Faustine did not grumble. Marie did. There were scarce rooms enough for them all, and no room for the boxes or the clothes! Now for a certainty her mistress would die, and die in an indecent place.

Janson sent Faustine to bed; but they dined together, he sitting by the bedside and coaxing her with each mouthful. She was almost hungry, but the mood to be petted was upon her, and she pretended she could not eat.

It was the courage of desperation that enabled Janson to choose this wild eyrie. He expected revolt, tears and threats, and was surprised when, having been fed, Faustine sighed contentedly.

"The air is splendid," he said optimistically.
"In a week we shall find you climbing those peaks and dancing through the forests."

"So soon?" She smiled. "How long will you flirt with Faith and bribe Hope? Do you think I believe you?"

"If you would believe me you would recover."

The windows of the room were wide open; behind an army of fir-trees the sun was shooting a mass of golden arrows across the valley; bars of purple topped the trees; there was no wind—a silence that the valleys and the sea never know.

Janson was wondering how long Faustine would bear it; Faustine was wondering how long he would hope. If he refused to face death, and clung, in spite of her, to hope, was it possible that this obstinate British faith might save her?

In the old days, unnumbered, men healed by faith alone; but the sick believed too. If she loved Janson she could believe him.

If she loved----

The golden arrows ceased to fly through the fir-trees from the mountain top; a pink cloud drove the purple bars from the sky; one bold star peeped from space, heralding the sweet mistress of the universe, mistress of all worlds, held in marriage bond to none—Night.

If she loved: she—Faustine!

She asked herself, dreamily, what was love? A storm. Yet Janson was at peace with her. Was this tangle of emotions in which she had lost herself with Brooke Haigg, something less than love?—the desire to conquer an unknown country with a dangerous foe: to subdue, lay waste, and afterwards, perhaps, to build on the ruins?

She asked Janson.

Darkness hid the mountains from sight, and the olive trees were ghostly battalions; not one, but millions of eyes watched them from the sky. The silence was a little oppressive; but before Janson could reply to Faustine's question, the twanging of guitar and mandoline, somewhere below in the darkness where a pepper tree shed blossom like red rain, broke the spell; then a man's voice singing one of Italy's songs. A light enough thing: love falling as water from a torrent, now soft, splashing like liquid kisses, now passionate, as if from a spring which gushed red wine.

The singer sang as if his heart commanded, and not his pocket. He laughed as he sang. And

the thrumming of the guitar and mandoline was like laughter and tears.

Faustine drew closer to Janson. Listening to the singer, he did not notice the action, and, as if repulsed, she quickly drew away and leaned back among the pillows, hiding her face.

The song ceased, and silence offered a commentary. Presently from the darkness the voice came again, and now the song was low and passionate, and only the guitar thrummed heavily. Love that destroyed was the theme, and Death the old robber.

Janson threw some silver, and Faustine sent a message in the singer's native tongue through the open window. And when he had gone away, the woods became full of music, the people of the hills played their pipes and reeds, and voices of night's Invisibles chanted drowsily.

"You haven't answered my question!"

Faustine's voice awoke Janson; the songs had set him dreaming.

## XXXI

"What is love? Shall I tell you? Love is an emotion given to all animals by nature for the purpose of propagating——"

"Silence, pour l'amour de Dieu!" Faustine cried.

"Do you believe it aught else? You may use it for your pleasure or amusement, make grand music of it, or twang a single string out of tune."

"Your love—is it no more?"

Janson did not reply.

"You think I don't know how to love? You, in your heart, think I am but an animal who perhaps could, if she chose, make grand music of this poor emotion common to all beasts?"

For a space he listened to the music of the woods; for though the singers had long departed, the forests and their company made mighty symphonies.

"I think you could do more."

"What more can love do?"

The room was lit by a bunch of candles flickering in a far corner; though the woods cheated 302

silence, the night was still; her breathing could not be heard, though her breath was sweet.

"Love can create, Faustine."

"To what end? Are men so happy that I should add to their number? Are cities so beautiful that I should help populate them? What is the average life but a race to escape the pig-bucket? Ambition is greed; the wild animals alone destroy that they may live; man destroys that he may wallow. Mon Dieu! what pride to produce a son who makes a corner in wheat, and starves the sons of a thousand mothers! Yours, love the creator, Janson; mine, love the destroyer. Isn't mine best?"

"Was it Brooke Haigg who once said you danced in ancient Rome, or Athens perhaps? Did the mothers who built Rome regret the building? Do the fathers of Egypt weep, do you think, because Egypt was, and will be again?"

"Why should they rejoice? And the women who are remembered are not the mothers but the mistresses: and the men, not the architects who builded, but the soldiers who overthrew."

Janson laid his hand on Faustine's.

"And you played with Moir-Brown's children?"
She nodded. "And wished they were my own.
When they are men they will no longer play."

"They will create—and destroy. Dearest, if there were no night there would be no day, no storm, no shine. If no destruction, there would

be no builders. Don't you understand?... all those mothers of the golden age, and of Egypt, Rome, and Athens, still live. They are calling to you to issue, recoined, the human mint conceived in their wombs. Lean forward, Faustine, and look from the window; that star that fell just there, flashing an instant on your gaze, is one of a family of worlds waiting for your sons and mine. The earth is old, but those eyes watching us are babes of the universe, born of destruction; they are in the nursery at present learning how to bear life, the life the Roman matron has handed down to you—and which you will hand down—"

"What has this to do with love, my Janson?"

"Love is life," he whispered; "and the seers and prophets, Christ, Mahomet, and the rest have told us so, but we forget; priests have mouthed away the meaning of their message. The first word the first man stammered was *love*; and it will be the last word. You are love, Faustine, and you must give life to love."

"Give-to whom?"

"To those builders and destroyers of whom you spoke."

"I called it hate-"

She sighed; the voices from the forests were silent. The night held her breath. "Kiss me, carissimo. . . . Tell me, when we part and go our separate ways, will you love?"

"You, always. You are my beloved."

"How can that be, since I shall leave you? Your love will be barren. Where, then, are your theories blown?"

"In your heart, perhaps, Faustine. Our child may be Memory, and if your love does not prove barren, memory may live in the hearts and direct the lives of your children."

"No children for me, if I go to Brooke Haigg."
" If——?"

Again the silence. Pregnant now the night. They waited, each holding breath, cheek pressed to cheek. A movement from the darkness beyond; night labouring-bringing forth her children. Faustine listened, clinging to Janson. She was beginning to understand his crude philosophy.

"What is it, dearest?"

"Do you hear anything?"

"Yes—and yet all is silent. . . . You love me?"

He held her in his arms—and told her his love. His language was the language of the night; the words he used were of little import; it was the manner of their use.

And Faustine listened, and peace came to her. This love, he told, was Rest, and she had dreamed of Tumult. It was strong too, stronger than the death she had learnt to fear. It came between her and death, just as it came between her and

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Brooke Haigg. Gladly she would have avoided death, but not he who had threatened it.

"Carissimo, I love you too," she cried, her lips burning to his. "Give me love. What does the future matter?"

He flung back his head. The sweetness of her lips and their perfume sucked his strength. He clung desperately to his gods.

Night had laboured and brought forth her children—and they were all children of love—and they were clambering about the bed, weaving garlands around Faustine and Janson; in a moment he would be imprisoned, and escape impossible.

"You must choose," he cried: "the love that destroys or the love that creates."

"Your love," she whispered. "Carissimovour love."

"Haigg-what of Brooke Haigg? You cannot go to him, Faustine, afterwards."

"Who will prevent?"

"I would kill you."

She laughed. "Kill me, then! So that I am yours, now."

"And always?"

"You said love is immortal. To-night I want immortality !--après-?"

She pulled him closer. Her lips were red as of old, and all her hair was loose; he saw the night and her golden stars in its darkness, and 306

the ivory of her neck, and twin white roses her breasts, hiding behind a trellis-work of lace.

Lower—closer still. The candles burnt brightly; their breath came like music of the perfumed breeze. Their lips met.

And then silence lay heavily in the arms of the night again. Only the music of the forests commenced once more.

#### XXXII

YET it was not Janson who taught Faustine his love, but she who taught him hers.

At first the sense of sin was upon Janson. Faustine removed it quickly.

Perhaps his pride was hurt that he had loved because his instincts demanded and his blood was inflamed, rather than because heart joined with head in deciding his actions.

After the first plunge, the sudden reaction, the marvelling at the unexpected, and the swimmer at his temerity, the quick shiver when dry land and daylight had to be faced—then love had his will of both.

Faustine no longer allowed Janson to exercise his crude philosophy. Not for her now the whence, the whither, or the wherefore of love: only its present joys. Love lay in her grasp at last; dreams, some of the many she had dreamed, were realised.

She was loved: not queen, but goddess among the olive-clad mountains and solemn cypresses.

All the secret and hidden ways of love she knew; one by one she taught them her lover. His ignorance was sublime. Each lesson learnt, he thought the summit of love's joys gained—only to find a peak luring him still higher. Peak after peak—pinnacle after pinnacle.

A traveller in an unknown country, how could he be weary? If love transformed him, it recreated Faustine. He saw her as he had first seen her when she danced in Paris, buoyant with health, exuding energy-life itself. Her pallor vanished, and fatigue she no longer knew. colour returned and her eyes kindled. The sunshine by day was theirs; at noon they slept in the shade, with a mountain torrent their slumbersong. At night they wandered through the forests, with starshine alone to guide them. Against the cypress grove she danced for him as she had never danced for gold in the theatres; she danced as the stars that watched; she sang as the people of the hills had sung on the first night.

She set the woods flaming with the fires of delight; pepper trees and fir, eucalyptus, almond, and mimosa, bowed their heads to shower their perfumes.

She would tire suddenly and, feigning faintness, creep into Janson's arms, the scent of the woodland on her feet and hands, the scent of herself hovering like dust shaken loose from her

garments. Hand in hand they would sit, quiet as two wild things, children lost in fairyland, watching from the highest peak for dawn. If they spoke, in whispers. They had held Love in their arms, feasted on his body and drank of his blood. Now they would watch him, as spectators.

Already they knew love was not only a thing of lips and hands and hearts: nor chained to bed of mistress or wife. Love was everywhere: Faustine's discovery—Janson's theory. That was why she led Love from sun to star-shine; that was why she chased him through valley and over hill into the depths of the woods.

Never the place and the hour alike; never the same song; never the same embrace.

And not their hearts alone beat in unison, but their minds: the physical was balanced by the spiritual. Faustine's lips gave more than kisses. Love trebled her joy in life; so her knowledge of life found expression. She knew the history of every nation: their soldiers and statesmen, their poets, painters, and their women—the women who had loved or hated.

None others mattered to her. She still refused to admit the mothers. Only one: she, the shewolf who had suckled Rome's first architect. Necessary, doubtless, but not interesting the others: mere pieces of mechanism invented by Nature in a moment of sloth.

Yet, sometimes on their rambles abroad, when

from a ruined cottage half-hidden by straggling vines with fruit already swelling to maturity, a troop of nearly naked children swarmed, dark-eyed, with olive skins and wild hair, limbed as gracefully as antelopes, with the smile of Guido Reni's virgins—for no child refused Faustine a smile—a silence fell between them; a silence half interrogative, like the startled query in a woman's eyes on beholding her mate.

"Love is everywhere!" Janson repeated aloud: "even in this swarm of naked savages—future millionaires or murderers, Faustine?"

She laid her hands on her breast, roughly bade the children begone, and turned away.

"There are other joys besides children."

"They were beautiful."

She nodded. "Beauty stolen from their mother. Did you see her?—parched skin, dry and hideous, carrying a load of bricks balanced on her head; sunken breast, protruding stomach. . . . And once she was beautiful—until her lips knew kisses, and her bed, children."

"If love had lasted, so would her beauty."

"Faustine a mother!" She laughed. "Even the Butcher would smile, Janson."

"You played with Moir-Brown's children, and they cried when you went away."

".... You want a child of your own—ch, carissimo?"

"I want you a mother."

Faustine's eyes clouded. "I am a mother, but not of flesh-and-blood children. Woman sometimes conceives in her soul. Men, from her breasts, have often drawn inspiration and courage. Her children, brought forth no less in agony, have been the deeds of statesmen, soldiers, artists. There are mothers who have borne spiritual children. Their names are written in history—a few of them: they are the mothers who are remembered."

Janson considered Faustine's words. Every thought which love had helped her express, came to him unexpectedly. He was angry with himself for being surprised, for he had not suspected the dancer a dreamer: the destroyer, a builder.

Count of days was lost: time, like space, enveloped them. They drifted through both like children guarded by an unseen parent, making no inquiries as to destination, finding each restingplace, inn or cottage, hotel or forest bed, their home.

Rome knew them—and they knew the eternal city. No argument there spoiled their dreams of the past. Reverently they trod the ruins, and the ruins gave up her secrets to them. They sat in the shadow of night with the dethroned gods: they watched again the games men played with Death.

Faustine had not spoken lightly. To them children were born, ghostly offspring perhaps,

but Janson, by love having been vouchsafed eyes to see and ears to hear, both saw and heard them. Desire, other than that of the flesh, was born: was nourished at the breasts none but a lover's lips had known.

It was at Venice where Faustine's mood changed, reverting almost to the mood of the first night on the mountains in Italy, or the last night of the dance in London—before the operation.

Her children she put to bed; no longer a mother—even of ideas: lover only. Venice demanded it. The hot nights; the waters silent, save when a gondola whispered secretively as it quivered through the darkness; the music, haunting mysterious houses bent with beauty—music that, in its speech, seemed to possess the gift of silence, like the waters, and in league with them: music of strings and throats, always in the air. Fingers trembling to twine themselves responsively in her fingers. . . . Venice! Faustine did well to hide her children away.

She had seen Time beckoning to her, and she knew the hours had run out.

Time and space were no more; ere either knew it, London roared in their ears. The bubble born in Italy burst. Janson looked at Faustine as bricks and mortar and coal-dust avalanched their beloved heads; she was shaken with sobs.

"Those children you spoke of — where are

they?" he cried. "Did I dream I felt their lips and arms about mine?"

"No dream, dear; I bore you what fruit I could . . . . children of the heart only. Don't let them go—don't starve them, Janson."

The avalanche thundered now; light of day disappeared. The darkness that enveloped them was not the darkness of the mountains or the forests—not even the warm darkness of a Venetian night; it was as the darkness of Remembrance.

"Faustine, we are not parting. We have only returned——"

"To the place whence we started. Carissimo, you have given me life; I, you, a little love, and perhaps a child or two our souls conceived:

—Comment le monde, s'en moquera! Let neither of us ask more. I to my work, you to yours: both stronger because of our holiday with l'amour.

... Will you not work better, now that you have les petits enfants de mon cœur to help you?

Tell me that is so."

<sup>&</sup>quot;It is so. But I want you-always."

<sup>&</sup>quot;You shall have me always—in your heart."

#### XXXIII

HAIGG laboured in London. Though Janson had left the field, around his book a fight raged fiercely: because the opposition was so loudly voiced and the hierarchy beat on its big drum so persistently, the world awoke and began to take notice.

Janson's book was read, even unto the third and fourth edition. The anti-vivisectionists took advantage of the limelight focussed on surgery to raise their voices against the abominations practised on dumb beasts—ignoring the beasts with speech. For a month or two London waded through a red sea of literature.

People who had been carved by surgeons, and escaped, exhibited themselves proudly, as soldiers worthy of decorations; others, who could boast a friend or relative deceased, who had, during his life, as much as seen a surgeon, lifted up their voices in lamentation, calling every medical man who wielded a knife, murderer.

Brooke Haigg could not cope with his work.

Women previously had besieged him; now they carried his fortress and refused to be sent away -whole !

The fascination of the man and his "medicine" was upon them. The fierce light centred on him attracted them as the lamp, moths.

Haigg sickened. If there had been a genuine fight he would have rejoiced; coat off, shirt sleeves rolled up, knife in hand, he would have annihilated the yelping crowd that hurled epithets at him and his profession.

Unfortunately he had been the fashion of the elect; now he became the fashion of the upper and middle-class mob. Those who howled loudest rang his bell most frequently.

And at the high tide of his success, gold rolling into his bank like breakers on to yellow sands, Bruton Street blocked with the traffic of his clients, he, without a word of warning, closed his front door, locked, barred, and bolted it.

The Butcher shut up Shop.

The news flashed from mansion to flat; the public, that portion of it which still yearned for vivisculpture, enraged at being cheated of a quick entrance either into fashion or the next world, threw up its hands, cried-"I told you so-that book has frightened him! Then it is true that he killed the Duchess of Languidt. What an escape I've had !"

Worn out in the service of the public. What

did the public care? It had encouraged butchery, and in its service one man at least had performed little less than miracles. If he had taken life, also had he saved it. If he had sometimes hurried Death's victims into his kingdom, he had delayed the setting forth of others.

Moreover, he had made discoveries and served science. Flesh and blood are cheap enough after all: most of Haigg's victims thought so, for many had owned land or houses in East London, and trafficked in it.

His last patient was not one of these, though she had trafficked—the woman whose life he had saved in the early days, and who had lost her own soul—she who had met him at the theatre on two occasions and begged for salvation—physical—a second time.

He sent for her, weary though he acknowledged himself of the whole business, more for the sake of science than his or her salvation. She might be an instrument in his hands to prove the value of surgery in tuberculosis. If the knife could slay that disease—then . . . .

The Butcher asked himself, what then?

The man who creates a slave finds himself one eventually. With his Shop shut up and his knife idle, where would he turn for refreshment?

Rest was what he needed? Indeed! but a man cursed with intellect cannot rest bovinely: nor can he rest alone.

Even whilst the angry waves of public opinion raged around him, the breakers of gold swept into his bank, and the sea of social lunatics hammered at his front door, his thoughts turned to Faustine. Fool to have let her go! He had known it at the time; but pride had held his hand; contempt for love had kept him dumb. Besides, she would come back. He could read women, and he had read Faustine's wish to conquer him.

She had failed. He was glad he had taught her a lesson.

His last operation was finished. Night dropped on the city, and he sat alone, as ever, in his room in Bruton Street—alone, with the glory of a past career, a title, a hoard of gold, and public opinion: all a man aims for when school-days are over. For one of these will he sell his soul. Haigg looked at Dead Sea fruit, and shuddered.

He was alone, neither the living nor the dead to bear him company: and surely both owed him a debt, the former for granting them their desires, and the latter for saving them from their desires. Alone in his Shop—save for his last victim.

Would she, he wondered, serve science, or had she already found her well-earned rest? Haigg had never known sentiment, but he had to confess himself curious.

This woman, saviour to other women, and therefore as saviour, crucified, was linked with his memory of Faustine. Moreover, she happened to be the alpha and omega of his career—the first and the last.

She ought, according to reason, to die. He decided that she must live. Not that it mattered to him now. Nothing mattered; the present hardly existed—a cloud of tobacco smoke in an empty room. The future was damnable to contemplate—unless illuminated by Faustine.

The thin lips relaxed in a smile, the iron jaws dropped, and the eyes lost their steel. Was this, already, second childhood?—that he was frighted of an empty house, life lived alone, and for food, Dead Sea fruit?

He threw aside the cigar, and passed from his room into the building where once Faustine had been. Curiously silent now: not with the well-known silence of sickness, rather that of death, the end of all.

The corridors were peopled with ghosts; they started up at his feet, peered at him with pale faces, lips agape with jests, and pursued him. Each door he passed sheltered a horde. Some few smiled kindly; some cursed; the whispering of others was of love. He heeded these spirits no more than he had the living flesh. He passed to the room of his last patient. As he opened the door, he turned his head and glanced back,

wondering if among the spirits who pursued was that of the Duchess of Languidt.

It would be amusing to ask her enter the sick-room of his last Duchess.

A night-light burned; the bed was in darkness. The nurse rose; she glanced at Haigg, but without surprise; that emotion was not allowed in Bruton Street. He stood by the bed waiting for his eyes to accustom themselves to the darkness.

"She is asleep."

It was not a question, rather an affirmation.

"Yes," the nurse replied; "she has slept for some hours now."

"And you?—go, sleep yourself. Send no one else . . . . I will stay here."

Still no surprise visible. The nurse left the room.

"Well?" It was the woman who spoke; her voice was like the chafed string of an old guitar, out of tune.

Haigg bent over her. "It is well."

She ventured to draw a breath.

"Do that again," the Butcher said, bending lower. How difficult it is to shut up Shop! "That will do. I shall save you."

"You're surprised?"

"Never:"

"I'm not. I knew you could save me; you did before. . . You remember? You weren't more'n a kid in those days."

" Don't talk."

"What are you here for?"

"Curiosity!"

The woman considered a while. "Why is it so dark? Ask the nurse to give me a looking-glass, and hold the light up, will you?"

"I've sent the nurse away; we're alone."

"I want to see myself. . . . Am I done for—my looks, I mean? Shall I be any good after this?"

"Not much, except to science."

The woman tried to laugh. "What good'll I be to science?—will science pay me?"

"Don't talk."

"Then go away; one can't help talking to you."

"Women will talk to stones," he sneered.

"You're no stone, you're dynamite. You'll explode one day. God! I pity the woman!"

Haigg himself ignored his repeated injunction. "How did you discover that?"

"It's easy enough to discover what's inside men. You aren't easy, but I dreamed about you."

"Dreams! Pshaw!"

"Sleeping and waking. Then I've noticed everyone here fears you—same way as a dog fears its master, but would rather be beaten than ignored, eh?"

"I don't know. . . . I told you not to talk, and I'm encouraging you. If you talk too much you'll kill yourself. Fair warning; but you amuse me."

She tried to raise herself. "That's what I'm for, isn't it—amusement?" Exhaustion came suddenly, and she closed her eyes. Haigg watched close in case death threatened. Instead, sleep came again; apparently the gods, and not he alone, had made up their minds that this woman should live. The surgeon watched by her side, thinking not of her but of Faustine. The thought came unexpectedly that perhaps she was dead.

No sooner considered than the thought became a fear. Startled and surprised, he walked noiselessly about the room. Fear of Death, his old comrade-in-arms and rival, at last! There were, he had often said, too many women in the world; of them all, Faustine could not be spared.

He wanted her: not for his Shop, but for himself. He forgot that each of the other women might have been wanted in the same way.

Fool to have allowed her to dance with Death; fool, again, to have allowed her to go with Janson—Janson, his head full of theory and his pocket of serum.

Up and down the room he walked the whole night, bearing the burden of his title, his career, and his lordly income, with increasing irritation, until his head drooped on his breast and his shoulders were bent; whilst in the bed she, who had not so much as title of Woman, nor career, nor anything to call her own—piece of gold, garret, or household god—slept as a child.

Haigg envied her, a moment. Just as London turned on its side to open its eyes to the dawn, she awoke. "I'm thirsty."

Haigg gave her drink.

"Talking didn't kill me, you see," she whispered.

"I wish you to live."

"You always get your own way?"

He frowned, and the steel in his eyes glinted. "I don't know. . . . I shall know soon." He straightened himself. "And if I do . . . . what shall I do with you, Mary Magdalene?—throw you back into the whirlpool?"

"If you don't mind."

"Or shall I pension you off? Five hundred

a year might prolong the agony."

The woman turned to sleep again. "You!—
you wouldn't give me a couple of quid that night
at the theatre when I asked, and your friend, he
emptied his pockets! You and your five hundred
a year! I can see you chucking five hundred
pounds into the whirlpool, I can!"

#### XXXIV

It was difficult to escape the crowd, though Haigg's servant possessed the cunning of a fox and the tongue of an angel who has converted Truth. But though he shut up Shop he could not leave the city.

He waited for Faustine.

His last patient recovered. In the ordinary course of events he would have dismissed her from the home; he told her she could remain.

Suddenly he developed nerves. Out-of-work was uncommonly like being out-of-mind. He dared not be seen in public—fearful of friends rather than enemies. When the bell of his house rang he started, and listened, hoping his servant would fail him and admit something human to drive away Silence.

The woman noticed the change in the Butcher.

"What's wrong?" she asked one day, overbold at feeling blood in her veins once more and hearing life beating its drums outside her four walls. "You've got the jumps."

"You'll have them soon," Haigg grunted.

"I've given Work notice to quit, and I'm waiting---"

The woman, fragments of sex having returned to her through her long rest, instinctively guessed. "Going to get married, eh? But you'll be at it again, pretty soon afterwards. I know!"

"At what?" Haigg knew that those in the whirlpool see the hidden things the river bears seaward.

"Well, at your work—cutting people up. "Tisn't easy to stop games like yours—or mine. You know that."

"I'm sick of the game. I never want to see flesh and blood again. This house, this street—the whole city reeks of it; wherever I go the reek and fume of it pursue." He laughed. "Not long ago I bought a dog—first signs of insanity—wanted a companion: cheaper than a woman, and, I thought, would remain longer. It ran away within the month—frightened."

The woman nodded. "Thought you'd experiment, eh? That's where I scored—I wanted you to experiment; it was worth your while to keep me alive—if you could. But the other animals . . . . You won't tell me who you're going to marry?"

"I'm not going to marry."

The woman said no more, but she smiled.

Each morning she asked Haigg why he did not let her go: she was quite strong enough. He

made excuses. When she went, and both houses were empty, he would go too, he knew. But where, he did not know. He could think of no place sufficiently distant from London—save the place where Faustine was!

At last acknowledging in full his weakness, he despatched telegrams to all the likely hotels in all the likely towns of Europe, telling the woman, who had proved herself mightier than the knife, to return. He did not examine himself at all; he did not know that he still burned incense before the only god he had ever worshipped. He still bowed the knee to Self, blindly seeking another burden for his back to add to fame, name, and wealth—the burden of the woman, heaviest of all.

Though ashamed to confess it, he thought love, or passion—he would not distinguish between the two—prompted. Having done with work, it was natural he should play. Faustine, his toy! His fear, lest she had been broken.

The same day that the English and Continental telegraph operators amused themselves with Haigg's cryptic messages, Faustine bade Love good-bye at Charing Cross station.

She did not dismiss Love; she sent him with Janson to keep House, to help his Work, to bear him company for all time.

Janson did not know at the moment; he thought it was a parting. But Faustine the dancer knew; her dream-children were no boast.

Of their love in the Southern lands was born that which would live always with Janson, so that never would he know the silence that already had entered the heart of the Butcher: nor weary of his labour. Leaving herself motherless, she gave their love Immortality. She might have remained mortal, a mother of mortals, even a wife! But for Janson's sake she left him; she knew that, than regret, there is no sweeter thing: it made Janson hers—and she Janson's for ever.

Moreover, when the Butcher was forgotten, her lover's work would live.

And so it came to pass.

#### XXXV

THE answer to Haigg's telegram came quickly. He was unprepared. He might have known the sudden ring and the impatient treble knock. Not until he heard the altercation in the hall and the voice of the perfect servant slightly raised, did he stir himself.

An importunate patient! Something to break the deadly monotony, to drive away the thoughts which clamoured for admittance—thoughts of Faustine, growing madder every moment thoughts hot and electric as desert air.

Rather a flesh and blood visitor than these unmanly strangers. He opened the door of his room. Sweeter than the desert, the wind that drove towards him, warm and laden with perfumes, subtle, strength-stealing, more deadly than any anæsthetic he had used.

He recognised it at once: the scent of a flesh and blood desert—the desert of his desires, whither his heart turned—the perfume that had first assailed him many months ago at

Oddenino's Restaurant and asked questions of his anatomy, to which answers were refused.

She had come to him. She had returned at last. Of course he had known that she would do so; fool to have doubted, coward to have feared.

He descended a few steps, and, looking down, saw Faustine. The servant stood aside, and he beckoned her up.

Flesh and blood indeed! His first thought—his triumph! Not Janson's work this—nor Nature's—but his.

An Andrea del Sarto, he! His piece of vivisculpture! Stronger than on the night he had first seen her and envied Nature. More beautiful—for his chiselling.

He watched her mount the stairs; his expression changed. The old steel burned in his eyes again; his lips met. He drew a deep breath, and, squaring his shoulders, threw off the burdens a successful career had planted there.

First and last he was a man, this woman, his and Nature's masterpiece, reminded him. She was magnificent. Her return was worth the temporary mental aberration he had undergone, fearing her loss. She was all he would have a woman. In the darkness of the staircase her mystery was intensified; the stealthy grace of her movements reminded him of the tigress stalking her prey—as she mounted, mounted up toward him—he, her lawful prey. His smile was exultant.

So she might think if she chose; but he knew. Their eyes met, and he recognised the challenge they had sent at their first meeting: the intellectual vigour, too, which he had sought in vain in the eyes of English women.

A poet would have sung, God's stars, twin moons of delight. Haigg saw two flames, but had no interpretation for them; her eyes burned with a light he had not previously noticed.

Without a word he held the door open, and she passed through. He closed it, and believed that he shut out for ever the Past.

Even wise men believe they can divide life into a series of thought-tight compartments, to be automatically closed and sealed when the moment comes for them to plunge into the waters of a woman's soul.

"Subfemina!" And down they go, intent on discoveries, the Unknown, and life in the Ocean free from the troubles of Earth's dust. Who on earth cares that they never come up again, but sink, or drift love-logged through seas of discontent!

"Well?" The Butcher unwillingly spoke the first word.

Faustine interpreted it literally. "Yes—no thanks to you, Destroyer."

Had she been thought-reader she could have struck no nearer his heart.

Destroyer—and he was building a submarine in which to dive with her.

"Sit down, and tell me where you've been and what you've done."

"Everywhere and Everything. Give me a cigarette; a match . . . thanks." She looked at him as he held the light. She saw the change, and laughed.

"Pauvre vieux! Sick at last."

"What do you mean?" Off his guard, he owned the truth.

"You want to escape from the charnel-house. I'm to save you from science and the lust of blood: is it not so?"

This was not what he had expected.

But the Butcher knew no trifling with truth. He bowed his head. Where Fear had stood, now Shame. "Yes, I want you to save me, Faustine. I am sick. I have shut up Shop. If ever I use a knife again, it will be on my own throat. But how did you know?"

She lay in the arm-chair, the cigarette between her lips, crossed her legs, tilted her head back, and looked at Haigg with half-closed eyes.

"You ask me how I know? You men—mon Dieu, you think you are the lords of creation, forgetting without women there would be no creation. Nature, who gave us the power of life, gave us too the knowledge of the creatures we create. I knew you, my friend, the moment I felt your eyes scanning me, from forehead to ankle, in the restaurant last year. I knew that Destino had

decided then, and it was useless for us to try to escape. If you could have loved "—she shrugged her shoulders—"you could not. To win you, the woman must use the whip, care! But love is good, freely given. Therefore, being too tired to fight with you, I went away. But now il destino has brought me here, each of us with our boats to burn. La, la! what a conflagration!"

Haigg rose; he stood over Faustine and held her hands. His were as ice; his body a steel frame.

"What is this—about love? What do you mean?... You and—Janson?"

She drew a cloud of smoke from her cigarette, allowed it to filter, a grey stream, between lips scarlet against the surrounding gloom. She nodded reply.

"We will not speak of Janson again," she said. And the voice was not the voice of Faustine the dancer; Haigg could not recognise it at all. "I have said, I wanted love. I have loved, et maintenant—"

Haigg drew back quickly; his voice was like a hammer against stone. "Now—you can go!"

She nodded, but did not move. "Just give me another cigarette. I came to tell you I was going away . . . . not quite sure where: I think the Devonshire moorlands. I want hills clad with heather, and clean streams singing English songs; and woodlands wet, bracken-grown, full of English

flowers. I shall be alone. . . . With autumn, I return here for you."

"You will not find me."

Faustine laughed. She stood beside Haigg. Before she touched him, he was shaken . . . . her presence . . . . the scent like dust blowing through him, even into his blood. He cursed her under his breath, and she laughed again—the laughter of Faustine the dancer. The poetry he had read unwillingly jingled with his thoughts:

"For in the time we knew not of Did fate begin Weaving the web of days that wove Your doom, Faustine. . . ."

"And now, au revoir, mon chirurgien. When the earth grows red I return. We cannot escape one another. Il destino!"

She rose and swung towards the door: the old careless walk, the old careless grace. Haigg stopped her.

"You seem sure of yourself, and of me."

"As sure as I am of Perdition!"

He seized her, and for a moment she thrilled in his grip. "I wanted all of you, life and love. You've cheated me."

"My life was in your hands; also my love. You spared both; blame yourself, fool, not me. Neither will be yours again, as once they might have been. You let the spring-time pass.

Now it is summer. You must wait for the winter, caro mio. You shall not freeze, I promise; we will light fires as big as l'enfer. . . . Au revoir!"

He tried to hold her. She freed herself—looked into his eyes: hers white-hot, his still just steel. . . . He listened to her footsteps on his stairs, the opening of the front door, the servant's voice, the closing of the door—and silence.

Presently someone entered the room: he dared not look up with defeat on his face. The perfect servant spoke. "Will you dine at home to-night, sir?"

At home! The jest was ill-timed. He nodded. He looked at his watch, then at the calendar. Half-past seven, June the nineteenth.

Mid-summer; but for him, winter—as yet distant. He was of a mind to visit Janson; if he had been of Faustine's breeding he would have done so—killed him, and satisfied the thirst that burned his soul. But he was British, and possessed a title, a career, and wealth.

Instead of Janson, the woman, Haigg's last patient, was his victim and knew his revenge. He dismissed her from the Bruton Street home, cured, and with her he sent a pension of five hundred pounds a year. When, gaping like an animal, she asked the reason, he told her—Pride of Work. It was necessary he should prove the value of surgery in tuberculosis. He suggested, to

augment her income, an arrangement with Madame Tussaud.

London knew the Butcher no more. The world wrote his name large, and the dying blessed it as they expired.

Janson, at work, not now with words but with deeds, fighting death, disease, and ignorance—deadliest foe of all—read of his fame, smiled, and waited. Not Fame for him, but the future Children of Men,—seeds Faustine had sown in his heart—their dream-children.

He saw her once, late in the year. He had taken a rest and climbed to the gallery of the opera to hear *Madame Butterfly*. Just as the second act closed, and *Butterfly* still waited at the window with the dawn for the return of her beloved, Something drew his eyes from the stage to a box on the right.

Through a haze he saw her, Faustine, and they spoke as ships, passing at sea, signal through the darkness, "All's well. God speed!"

And once again—last scene of all—a late autumn morning; the river wrapped in yellow gloom; the sky grey and the waters in a hurry to escape to the sea.

He stood with her two friends Sigismund Noyada and Moir-Brown on the wooden landingstage at Liverpool, watching the great liner belch

black smoke. Each man had shaken hands with Faustine in the orthodox British fashion—even Noyada—and with cold lips said good-bye and good voyage . . . . and the rest. Haigg also had shaken hands, smiling.

And now the liner, belching blacker smoke and fire, swung into mid-stream. The breeze caught the smoke and drove it down with the yellow fog, and the boat looked like hell afloat.

The stream, now churned to anger, bubbled oil and vomited filth, and as the ship moved forward the water reddened as if the monster bled. In a saloon an orchestra made music; distance, the breeze, and the fog cheated the listeners of melody, but gave them the weeping of violin and sob of 'cello.

Motionless they stood, the three men who loved Faustine, and watched the boat sink into the mist, watched the waters of the unclean stream spurt from her propellers, watched the blood-red trail she left.

Faustine and Brooke Haigg in the stern, as motionless as they, watched also, bidding farewell to Life as Life had known them. Quickly England faded into cold obscurity, and the ship and they ploughed toward a New World.

The three men walked away from the river, now desolate, but red where the boat had churned its waters.

"I loved her," the alien sobbed aloud. "Mon 336

Dieu, how I loved her!" And he went back to his Italian restaurant in Soho.

"Even the children cried when they knew she was going away," Moir-Brown said thoughtfully, looking through the fog towards the sky. "A pity a good fellow didn't marry her . . . . such a mother of men!" And he went back to his pills.

Janson said: "Physician, heal thyself." But when he went back he found the little Children of her heart waiting for him. Dream-children; but they have builded mightily in the Past, and Faustine had given them him to build the Future. And he wondered whether it would be the Butcher or he, who, in the end, God would say had won Faustine?

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